

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**
DATE: **TUESDAY, 16TH JULY 2013**
REPORT BY: **DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT**
SUBJECT: **VIBRANT AND VIABLE PLACES**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To update Members on the invitation from Welsh Government to submit a bid for funding under this new programme.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 On 11 March 2013, Welsh Government published the Wales Framework for Regeneration, setting out a new approach to regeneration. In the Framework, clear outcomes and priorities for support are set out:-

1. Prosperous communities
2. Learning communities
3. Healthier communities

2.02 The priorities for Welsh Government support were identified as:-

1. Town centres
2. Coastal communities
3. Communities First clusters.

2.03 Welsh Government launched the Vibrant and Viable Places programme on 15 May 2013. The aims of the programme are:-

- “to revitalise and promote the sustainable development of town centres, coastal communities and Communities First clusters, making the most of their green infrastructure, heritage and historic character;
- to build sustainable and vibrant communities that are more prosperous, better educated and healthier;
- to tackle poverty by creating jobs, encouraging skills development and helping people into work;
- to encourage wider investment in housing; and

- to deliver strategic, regionally important projects of significant scale;”
- 2.04 Welsh Government stated that “the limited investment will therefore be targeted at the most coherent and integrated regeneration projects and at those which make best use of the wide array of possible funding sources with regeneration funding acting as the catalyst for action.” A budget of £90m has been allocated for the three year period commencing 1 April 2014.
- 2.05 Each local authority has been invited to submit a bid for funding on behalf of a local partnership involving the public, private and voluntary sectors. Only one bid will be accepted for each authority and this will be for a single settlement area. The bid must set out proposals for an integrated programme of regeneration over a three year period and be of up to £5m per year. WG has advised that it proposes to support only 5 to 8 projects across Wales.
- 2.06 The programme will offer up to 75% funding, with the remaining matched funding to be found from other sources. Other Welsh Government or European Commission funds cannot be used as match. The degree of leverage will be a key determinant for successful bids.
- 2.07 The deadline for first stage bids is currently 12 July 2013. Members should note that the Council has requested an extension to the timescale for submitting the bid to align with the next meeting of Cabinet, to allow a formal decision to be taken. This was not granted. As a result, a draft bid has been submitted in accordance with the deadline, with reference to the fact that it will be going to the Council’s Cabinet on 16 July.
- 2.08 Welsh Government will produce a short-list of up to twelve proposals by 2 September 2013. Short-listed areas will then be asked to submit fully worked-up proposals by 4 November 2013, based on the Treasury Five Case Business Model. Project delivery is expected to begin in April 2014.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.01 The Council is well-placed to bid for funding of this kind, since it has well-developed strategic, long-term plans in place for Flintshire’s main communities, In particular, work on the Town Action Plan programme and the Deeside Regeneration Area has been underway for the last five years. Where possible, work has already been integrated with that of the Rural Development Plan, the European Regional Development Fund, Communities First and the Destination Management Partnership. The range of regeneration activity currently underway is shown in Appendix 1.

3.02 Welsh Government intends to select bids through a competitive process; the strength of Flintshire's bid and the fit with Welsh Government key aspirations will therefore be critical to the County's chances of success.

The criteria identified by Welsh Government for this programme are:

Criteria	Value
Key outputs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment levered in (Welsh Government, public, private and third sector) • Net additional jobs created. • People supported into work. 	20%
Strategic fit – with Local Development Plan, Single Integrated Plan, regional priorities and Welsh Government Programme for Government commitments, including tackling poverty, delivering jobs and growth and promoting equality.	20%
Policy fit – extent to which the bid is directly addressing regeneration of town centres, coastal communities and/or Communities First clusters in an integrated way.	15%
Contribution to improving housing condition and supply, for example increasing residential accommodation in town centres.	15%
Quality of programme delivery, for example in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear rationale and case for change; • clear links between activities, outputs and the national outcomes for regeneration, with RBA use evidenced; and • robust governance and project management arrangements. 	10%
Evidence of value for money.	10%
Evidence of creativity and innovation, including where appropriate creating opportunities for social enterprises and the use of new financial models.	10%

3.03 The potential fit of each town in Flintshire with these criteria is summarised in Appendix 2; Deeside offers the strongest case against those criteria which have the highest weighting and at least matches the other towns in all the remaining criteria.

3.04 Deeside is considered to offer the most compelling option for Welsh Government due to the size of community it embraces, the potential scale of the regeneration activity and investment anticipated. Delivering the programme in Deeside will offer Welsh Government the opportunity to use this programme to play a key catalysing role in

releasing major housing, employment and regeneration investment and for the Vibrant and Viable Places programme to form a piece in a wider jigsaw of programme delivery. The Deeside proposal offers considerable benefits locally, to Flintshire and to the wider sub-region, since;

- Deeside is a regional employment hub; DEZ already provides 20,000 jobs, with a target of 7,000 new jobs planned;
- Deeside is the gateway to North Wales and is a key transport hub;
- Deeside is the priority regeneration objective for the Council and includes four of the ten most deprived wards in Flintshire.

A successful V&VP bid will enable the Council to help bring economic benefit for the whole North Wales region.

3.05 Should the bid be approved, the main elements of the Programme will include:

- developing infrastructure for the Advanced Manufacturing Skills and Technology Centre (AMSTC) - to act as a hub for manufacturing, research and skills development;
- housing investment across private and public sectors to meet Wales Housing Quality Standard and to bring houses up to exemplary energy and sustainability standards;
- 'Deeside Works' – a major programme of work designed to match local people with jobs, to ensure that they are prepared for the world of work and are equipped with the skill sets needed;
- acquisition of town centre sites for redevelopment and improvements to vacant units to encourage new uses;
- support entrepreneurship and skills development to enable local people to access opportunities;
- improvements to the physical environment within the area, including work to develop the heritage of the area as an old manufacturing and shipbuilding location, including the possible reuse of Connah's Quay Dock as a berth for tall ships;
- Deeside is already a transport hub, with proposals to invest further in highway capacity, rail and cycleways so as to improve connectivity across North Wales and North West England;
- develop more and better links between Northern Gateway and Deeside Industrial Park and the local communities of Deeside.
- improvements to the green infrastructure of the area, including Wepre Park (Heritage Lottery funding secured), the Dee Regional Park, a new linear park along the river Dee, linking the Dee Coastal Cycleway and Footpath and the proposed open space that will be provided as part of the Northern Gateway development.

- 3.06 The above programme will need further development to identify costs, sources of funding, deliverability in the time scale of the programme, and governance required should the bid proceed to the second round.
- 3.07 The Programme outlined in 3.05 will help the Council to meet several of its Improvement Priorities , particularly :-
- Business Sector Growth in Deeside, through creating jobs and growing the local economy
 - Social Enterprise, through helping to create new forms of local business
 - Modern efficient and adapted homes, through improving the choice and quality of local housing
 - Transport Infrastructure and services, through helping people to access employment, local services and facilities
 - Apprenticeships and Training, through helping to meet the skills and employment needs of local employers
 - Deeside Renewal Area Programme, through improving the local urban environment
- 3.08 As part of the development of our bid, which is deposited in the Members Library for information, we have elicited support from :-
- The LSB, which has agreed to the submission in principle
 - Deeside College, supporting the proposed approaches to skills and access to jobs
 - Praxis and PRDL, the owners of the two parts of the Northern Gateway site, regarding private sector leverage and their willingness to enter into a local 'social contract', which would target recruitment into the local community.
- 3.09 The Deeside Partnership, due to meet for the first time in late July 2013, will play a crucial role in co-ordinating the different strands of activity and in mobilising the resources of the different partners. The Partnership will provide effective governance for the programme and will report to Flintshire County Council Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees on progress.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 That Cabinet gives approval to submit a bid to the Welsh Government Vibrant and Viable Places programme to support the strategic regeneration programme in Deeside.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 Existing Council funds allocated to housing activity and transport in Deeside will be used to match fund the programme. The anticipated sources of match funding are from; the Council Housing Revenue Account (to meet Welsh Housing Quality Standard); Council funding for the Housing Renewal Programme; and private sector investment.

£5m of match funding would be required to draw down £15m from Welsh Government. As Appendix 1 shows, the Council Housing Investment Programme in Deeside is £8m currently, so provides ample match. The programme has the potential to generate significant levels of private sector match funding in addition due to the presence of the Enterprise Zone and the large housing allocations.

No funding from areas outside Deeside will be needed to be diverted to match fund the programme as there is sufficient funding within the existing Deeside allocations.

Detailed costing of the programme will begin in August 2013 but indicative costs have been prepared for the bid.

At this stage, no additional resource from the Council has been identified as being required.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 The securing of substantial funding of this scale will benefit the most deprived areas of the County and will have an impact which will extend beyond Deeside.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 Environmental enhancement is a key outcome of this programme; the Council is expected to see significant benefits for the most environmentally stressed part of the County.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 The programme is targeted at some of the most deprived communities in Flintshire and will help tackle economic, social and environmental issues.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 This is a major programme and its delivery is likely to make significant calls on officer time.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 Not clear as yet.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 With WG.

12.00 APPENDICES

- 12.01 Appendix 1 - Regeneration activity across Flintshire
Appendix 2 - Flintshire Towns Fit with WG Guidance

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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