

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **TUESDAY, 21 JANUARY 2014**

REPORT BY: **DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT**

SUBJECT: **RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN LOCAL ACTION
GROUPS 2014-2020**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To seek support in principle for Cadwyn Clwyd to act as the Local Action Group for Flintshire for the next Rural Development Plan (RDP) Programme.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The RDP is part of the Common Agricultural Policy and includes measures to support agriculture, conservation and forestry as well as wider rural development. Development work is underway at European and Welsh Government levels on the replacement programme for the current one.

2.02 In November 2013 applications were invited by Welsh Government from prospective partners who wished to come together to form a LEADER Local Action Group. The Local Action Groups will be the main vehicle for community led local development for the RDP for Wales 2014-2020. LEADER activity in Wales for 2014-2020 will follow the current LEADER concept focussing on innovation, piloting of new approaches, networking, and bottom-up community working.

2.03 Expressions of interest need to be submitted by 31st January 2014. Applicants approved at the initial stage would then be invited to submit a full application for Local Action Group status and develop a Local Development Strategy.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 The Minister for Natural Resources and Food announced in November that Wales will receive €355m (£297.4m) for the Rural Development Plan over the period 2014-20. Within the context of declining public sector finances, the Programme should make a significant contribution to the strategic priorities of the County Council and make a measurable impact on the lives of the rural population.

3.02 The Welsh Government's open call for organisations to act as Local

Action Groups was widely disseminated and promoted and asks for one expression of interest from each area, supported by the local authority. Cadwyn Clwyd is the only organisation to have approached the Council with an expression of interest. The decision to appoint the Local Action Group rests entirely with Welsh Government, but Welsh Government wants a supporting statement from the 'host' local authority. There is in effect therefore only 1 bidder for the role and so an exemption from Contract Procedure Rules will be sought dispensing with the requirement to subject the position to further competition.

- 3.03 Cadwyn Clwyd has been delivering rural development programmes in Denbighshire since the early 1990s and in Flintshire since 2000. It has a robust track record in delivering rural projects, using Rural Development Plan and European funds and has the necessary experience and systems to manage the demanding administrative requirements posed by these funding bodies. Cadwyn Clwyd is a non-profit company limited by guarantee with Flintshire representatives on its Board of Directors.
- 3.04 Denbighshire County Council has already given approval to Cadwyn Clwyd to act as the Local Action Group for their County. Wrexham County Borough Council has also been approached. It is hoped that taking a shared approach to the management of the programme in North East Wales will reduce the scale of administration required and ensure that a greater proportion of the funds can be used to meet the needs of the area.
- 3.05 The Rural Development Plan Programme is still at an early stage of development, so many of the details for the future management and funding of the Programme are as yet unclear, including the expected role of local government. It is therefore only possible to offer “in principle” support to Cadwyn Clwyd at this stage, subject to some key areas for further discussion and agreement and to more detailed information being made available by Welsh Government.
- 3.06 There are a number of areas which it is felt would need further discussion and agreement before full support could be offered by the Council. The areas for further development are:

Strategic direction

Although development of the Programme will be heavily guided by Welsh Government, the Council will expect that the Programme will be used to make measurable and effective contributions to addressing the strategic needs of the area, as set out in the North Wales Economic Ambition Board strategy, the Single Integrated Plan for Flintshire and the Flintshire Regeneration Strategy. The Council would expect to be fully involved in the development and monitoring of any strategy for Flintshire.

Governance

Appropriate governance arrangements will need to be established to ensure that democratic oversight can be applied to the Programme and that expenditure can be robustly judged for effectiveness and value for money.

Assurance

Appropriate systems will need to be put in place to ensure that the activities supported by the Programme offer cost-effective solutions to meeting the strategic priorities of the County. The Local Action Group will be expected, in developing their proposals further, to demonstrate how they will ensure that their work dovetails with that of wider partnerships and the Council as a whole.

Financial support

At present, no financial support to the Programme as a whole or to Cadwyn Clwyd has been identified. Any calls made upon Council resources would be subject to a further report to Cabinet.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 That the nomination of Cadwyn Clwyd as the Local Action Group for Flintshire for the 2014 to 2020 Rural Development Plan Programme be approved in principle subject to satisfactory agreement being reached on the areas listed in 3.06 above.
- 4.02 That a further report is brought to Cabinet for approval of the final details of the management and delivery arrangements for the new Programme.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 The details of how the future Rural Development Programme will be managed and funded have not been made clear at this stage. No commitment will be made to support the Programme or Local Action Group beyond this “in principle” agreement without a further report to Cabinet.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 Whilst the future priorities of the Rural Development Plan are still under development, it is clear that there will be a significant focus on improving the economy of rural areas.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 Environmental sustainability is expected to be one of the cross-cutting themes for the Programme and all projects will need to integrate this into their design and delivery and their impact is monitored.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 Equal opportunities and social inclusion are expected to be cross-cutting themes for the Programme and all projects and contracts will need to integrate these into their design and delivery and their impact is monitored.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None at this stage.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 None.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 None.

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

Contact Officer: Sharon Barlow
Telephone: 01352 702135
Email: sharon.barlow@flintshire.gov.uk