

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **WEDNESDAY, 11 JUNE 2014**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER (COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE)**

SUBJECT: **MERSEY DEE ALLIANCE – PROGRESS REPORT**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

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

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The MDA is a formal partnership of:

- 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
- University of Chester

2.02 The area of North East Wales and North West Cheshire is unique in the UK as a major economic area divided by a national boundary. Key features of the MDA area are:

- a largely self contained but dynamic economy with a population of 500,000 and with 81% of all journeys starting and finishing in the area;
- an economy which when measured by Gross Value Added (GVA) is considerably larger than that of Cardiff and Swansea and equivalent to half that of Wales;
- an economy which is characterised by rising economic activity and low unemployment;
- a location for manufacturing and service operations which are of national and regional importance in aerospace, automotive, chemicals, financial services, food engineering and tourism.

2.03 The Mersey Dee Alliance was formed in recognition of the shared interests of both sides of the national border and to develop a joint approach to key economic matters particularly about market planning,

major transport infrastructure and lobbying on issues of shared concern.

- 2.04 The MDA is managed by a Board, with FCC represented by a Cabinet Member and a senior officer. The formal agreement, setting out administrative and governance arrangements has previously been agreed by the Council. The MDA addresses matters which are of sub regional rather than local importance, and its work programme is fully in line with the council's policies and strategies.
- 2.05 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.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.01 Over the last year, the following areas of work have been pursued:

(I) Dee Region Report – Dr. Elizabeth Haywood 2013

Members will be aware that the MDA Board submitted a case to the Welsh Government for City Region Status, for the Mersey Dee Area – the 'Dee Region'.

This bid was not accepted but Welsh Government did accept that the MDA was an area that needed further consideration.

Dr. Haywood's report was completed in September 2013 and set out the following key messages:

- MDA has a genuine Unique Selling Point (USP). It is the only functional, cross border economic area in the UK;
- Focus on a few priorities;
- Secure effective business engagement and support;
- Continue to build cross party, cross border political support;
- Consider pooling resources to address priorities;
- Commit to the long term and develop appropriate governance structures, involving both WG and UK Government.

Discussions are ongoing with WG, particularly on how the final bullet point can be addressed.

(II) Growth and Investment Prospectus

Work has been commissioned to inform, implement and secure appropriate recognition for MDA priorities in the strategic economic plans and European Structural funds bids being developed by the two Local Enterprise Partnerships and the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. This will focus on:

- The growth potential of the M56/A55 Innovation Corridor and the actions needed to realise this potential;
- The actions necessary to raise the profile of the MDA among key stakeholders – the recommendation of the Haywood report;
- Key messages that will form the basis of an inward investment marketing proposition for the MDA area.

3.02 A copy of the MDA Review of 2013 will be distributed at the meeting.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 That the report be noted.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 Membership of the MDA is £5000 pa and it is proposed that will be held for a further year.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 The maintenance of property and targeted approaches to meeting the needs of deprived communities are both MDA priorities.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 The protection and enhancement of the national and built environment are key principles which underpin all MDA strategy.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 The maintenance of property and targeted approaches to meeting the needs of deprived communities are both MDA priorities.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None directly.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 Not applicable.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 Not applicable.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 None.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: MDA file

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