

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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

DATE: **WEDNESDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2014**

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

SUBJECT: **MERSEY DEE ALLIANCE**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To update on the recent activity of the Mersey Dee Alliance.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 An update report was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June. This report describes key activities since that date and future and ongoing plans.

2.02 Earlier this year Mickledore produced a Growth and Investment prospectus which was welcomed and supported by the MDA; with recommendations that the MDA focus on cross border skills/labour market and transport priorities. It suggested dedicated resource for project management of skills and transport. The report also recommended additional focus on raising the profile of the MDA with UKTI, WG and other agencies, including the LEP's and EAB.

2.03 The MDA supported a North Wales EAB event on 26th June at the International Festival for Business in Liverpool. In addition, two further MDA business breakfast events have been held since the last update report with a further planned for 26th November. These meetings use a successful "elevator pitch" format to allow business to promote what they do and build networks. Locations change across the region and the number of attendees is very high and growing. Flintshire Business week hosted an event at Coleg Cambria on 8th October.

2.04 At the end of July Ken Skates AM, attended a meeting of the MDA, to discuss cross boarder employment and skills. He confirmed in writing later that WG is very supportive of regional partnerships and that the MDA skills and employment issues are integral to supporting the North Wales EAB Employment and Skills Plan. He extended an invitation to the MDA to attend the North Wales Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Skills summit on 6th November.

2.05 In September, a number of MDA board members met the new Secretary of State for Wales, alongside North Wales political leaders

to discuss non devolved matters. This was a successful event in raising the profile of the MDA and its cross border benefit.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 At its most recent meeting, the MDA Board agreed that a new 3 year business plan will be developed for approval at the next board. The current plan was agreed in July 2012. The new plan will outline how the MDA can most effectively implement the priorities of the board. The main areas of focus for the business plan will be

1. Plans for high level strategic influencing/stakeholder engagement- this includes development of the MDA innovation network and engagement with the business community.
2. Labour market and skills-development of a cross border labour market plan, securing funding for cross border skills projects and programmes to meet the needs of major employers and growing SME's in key sectors.
3. Transport infrastructure and services-securing agreement and support for cross border transport priorities.

3.02 In addition, a number of more operational priorities have been agreed to help support the delivery of the strategic objectives, which are detailed below.

- A 2 year term of office for Chair and Vice Chair to aid continuity of leadership.
- That the MDA retains dedicated part time senior officer and admin support
- That Cheshire West Council on behalf of the MDA, recruits a part time Employment skills and strategy officer to work across the MDA geography on labour market and skills
- That a communications plan is developed by Dr Elizabeth Heywood
- Development of a co-ordinated cross border transport infrastructure priority plan

3.03 A number of governance issues have also been considered in recent months to maximise the effectiveness and engagement of the MDA across the broader region.

3.04 It has been suggested that the chair of the Deeside Enterprise Zone be invited to attend MDA meetings. Subject to WG support this will be accepted. Representatives from the North Wales EAB, the Liverpool City Region and Cheshire and Warrington LEP'S will also be invited as participating observers. Further education colleges will be offered joint membership with one seat on the board. Consideration is also being given to the role of "business advocates" on the board, as a

means of securing engagement with the business sector.

3.05 The North Wales EAB is currently considering its governance arrangements and whether the MDA should be invited to join its board in an observer capacity. Both of these arrangements would serve to strengthen MDA relationships with partners in North Wales.

3.06 Denbighshire County Council has indicated its intention (subject to full council approval in December) to resign its membership of MDA with effect from April 2015.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 Committee is asked to note this report and the value of the MDA to the successful development of the Flintshire economy.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 The total annual budget for the MDA is circa £80k. This includes a 7k contribution from Flintshire. Budget provision has been made for this in 2015/16.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 A growing economy will help to reduce poverty.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 None associated directly with this report

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 None associated directly with this report

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None associated directly with this report

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 None

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 None

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

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