

COMMUNITY & ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 19 th October 2016
Report Subject	Growth Vision and Strategy for the Economy of North Wales
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Economic Development
Report Author	Chief Officer, Community and Enterprise

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the *Growth Vision for the Economy of North Wales*. The vision, which is being presented to all six councils for adoption, sets out a clear ambition for North Wales for infrastructure development, skills and employment, and business growth. If funding is secured in phases for the supporting action plan then the region will be able to see a positive future for sustainable economic growth. The region has been invited by the UK Government to make a Growth Bid for investment in infrastructure, skills and Economic Growth planning in parallel to the Growth bids emerging within regions of England. The vision is a precursor to a formal Growth bid.

The council has also been working closely with partners in the Mersey Dee Alliance, Economic Ambition board, North Wales Business Council and West Cheshire and North Wales Chamber of Commerce, to develop and launch a prospectus for rail improvement across North Wales and the Mersey Dee area as a requirement to support improved economic growth. This report presents the prospectus for Scrutiny support and endorsement.

RECOMMENDATION

1.	To support the "Growth Vision for the Economy of North Wales" as the basis for negotiation with the UK and Welsh Governments over a Growth Bid for the region.
2.	To support and endorse the prospectus for Rail Improvement "Growth Track 360".

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	PURPOSE OF THE VISION AND STRATEGY
1.01	Attached to this report is the <i>Growth Vision for the Economy of North Wales</i> . The Growth Vision is being presented to all six councils in North Wales for adoption.
1.02	The vision sets out a clear ambition for North Wales for infrastructure development, skills and employment, and business growth. If funding is secured in phases for the supporting action plan then the region will be able to see a positive future for sustainable economic growth. The value of the North Wales economy could increase from £12.8 billion in 2015 to £20 billion by 2035 under this programme and generate an additional 120,000 new employment opportunities.
1.03	The region has been invited by the UK Government to make a Growth Bid for investment in infrastructure, skills and economic growth planning in parallel to the Growth Bids emerging within regions of England. This means that the region is being recognised in its own right. Flintshire is ensuring that any Growth Bid is closely interconnected with planning in the immediate North West of England. The vision is a precursor to a formal Growth bid.
1.04	The vision is made possible by collaboration and partnership working with a strong private sector involvement. The vision builds on the strong alliances and joint planning across the region through the work of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and, cross-border, with the Mersey Dee Alliance and the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership. There has been extensive consultation during the process of developing the vision.
1.05	The region is keen to pursue the invitation of the UK Government for North Wales to open discussions over a Growth Bid. To follow the preliminary meetings held with Government representatives over recent months, the formal presentation of the vision is the first major step towards making a Growth Bid. The Vision sets out our aims and aspirations for “a confident, cohesive region with sustainable economic growth, capitalising on the success of high value economic sectors and its connection to the economies of the Northern Powerhouse and Ireland”.
1.06	The Vision is supported by the leaders and chief executives of all six unitary authorities within the region, the North Wales Business Council, Bangor University, Glyndwr University, Coleg Cambria and Grwp Llandrillo – Menai (College). North Wales is a united region with a strong sense of identity. The Vision gives clear direction for future planning. The Vision is also supported by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board which has a broad membership representing the public, private, education and third sectors. This demonstrates that there is a broad base of support across the sectors of the region. Given this base and strength of support, we can be confident that there will be collectivism and momentum in the planning and delivery of jointly agreed priorities.
1.07	The region views a Growth Bid as one of the vehicles to secure investment to achieve the aims and aspirations of the Vision from now until 2035. The Vision should succeed in bringing together the UK Government and Welsh

	Government with shared purpose to capitalise on the potential of the region. The vision complements the developing strategy for the Northern Powerhouse, is fully integrated with the Growth Bid submission of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership, and has the Growth Track 360 for rail investment at its core. By building an investment strategy around this outward-looking vision we can succeed in capitalising on the opportunities within the North Wales region whilst adding value to a connected and cumulative set of regional plans for Northern England and the wider UK economy.
1.08	The region is requesting an early opportunity to present the vision to the Treasury and the Wales Office and to open discussions on investment needs, priorities and expectations. The Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure of the Welsh Government has already given his informal support to the concept of a growth strategy for North Wales which is integrated with the macro planning for North West England and has connectivity to the wider UK economy. Welsh Government recognises that the Vision directly supports the growth of the advanced manufacturing and energy sectors which are prioritised by Welsh Government as the two lead sectors for the region. The delivery of a growth vision for North Wales is also identified in the recently published programme for Government.
1.09	Following a rail summit in North Wales last year, the North Wales and Mersey Dee rail task force was established to co-ordinate action and reduce institutional complexity in this unique cross border area. It provides a single approach to delivery in an area of five Enterprise Zones, eight Local Authorities, two national governments and a vibrant and varied private sector. Partners are aligned to recognise one economic area and one unified transport network to serve it. Investment in rail improvement has the potential to transform the economy and allow our workforce to better access opportunities both inside and outside the region. The prospectus identifies both short and long term priorities and is attached as Appendix 2 to this report. The prospectus has been submitted to the UK and Welsh Government and work is underway to take forward the development of early priorities.
1.10	The Council's Cabinet approved the growth vision at its meeting on 20 th September 2016.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None at this early stage.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Extensive consultation underpins the vision document as set out in the report.
3.02	The Growth Track 360 prospectus attached to this report, includes a selection of the endorsement and support for the rail improvements identified and needed across the region, from a broad range of stakeholder groups and individual businesses.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None at this early stage.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<i>Growth Vision for the Economy of North Wales.</i>
5.02	<i>“Growth Track 360” rail prospectus.</i>

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None. Contact Officer: Clare Budden Telephone: 01352 703800 E-mail: clare.budden@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) - Set up in England in 2011, by the Department for Business innovation and skills to lead economic growth and job creation across a region. They are voluntary partnerships between Local Authorities, and business.</p> <p>Growth Deal – funds provided to LEP’s (or Local Authority partnerships in Wales), for projects that benefit the local area and the economy.</p> <p>Devolution deals- have no set format, but involve the devolution of powers and budgets for the delivery of services across a region. In England to date this has included the appointment of a directly elected Mayor, to lead a new “combined local authority”.</p> <p>North Wales Economic Ambition Board – partnership of local authorities, private sector, education institutions, working to develop stronger economic growth for the North Wales region.</p> <p>Mersey Dee Alliance – partnership of Flintshire, Wrexham, Wirral and Cheshire West and Chester Councils, with private sector, and education institutions, working together for sustained economic growth in the cross border region.</p>