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## NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD 15/03/19

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### **Present:**

Voting Members - Councillors:- Gareth Jones (Conwy County Borough Council), Mark Pritchard (Wrexham Council), Aaron Shotton (Flintshire Council), Dyfrig L. Siencyn (Gwynedd Council), Robin Williams (Isle of Anglesey County Council).

Advisors – Sasha Davies (Chair of the North Wales Business Workshop), Dafydd Evans (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai), Maria Hinfelaar (Glyndwr University), Steve Jackson (Coleg Cambria), Prof. Jo Rycroft-Malone (Bangor University), Ashley Rogers (North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council).

Chief Officers - Marc Jones (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Iwan Davies (Conwy County Borough Council), Colin Everett (Flintshire Council), Judith Greenhalgh (Denbighshire Council), Ian Bancroft (Wrexham Council), Dilwyn Williams (Gwynedd Council).

Officers in attendance – Dafydd L. Edwards (Section 151 Officer), Iwan Trefor Jones (The Board's Lead Director), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer) and Annes Sion (Member Support Officer).

### **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Llinos Medi Huws (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Cllr Hugh Evans (Denbighshire Council), Prof. Graham Upton (Bangor University) and David Jones (Coleg Cambria).

### **2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

A declaration of interest was received from Iwan Trefor Jones for item 9 - Programme Director of North Wales Economic Ambition Board - due to the nature of the post in question it was a prejudicial interest and he withdrew from the meeting for this item.

### **3. URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items.

### **4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 February as a true record.

### **5. NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD GOVERNANCE**

Submitted by Iwan Evans, Monitoring Officer.

### **DECISION**

Resolved to:

1. Accept the report
2. Accept that the North Wales Economic Ambition Board as far as reasonably practicable will meet at a single appropriate North Wales venue in accordance with the report.
3. Pending the establishment of a formal Business Leaders Group Appoint the Chairman of Business Delivery Board as an Adviser to the Economic Ambition Board and to confirm the Advisers structure.
4. That a further report on proposed Sub-Boards be presented to the next meeting of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board.
5. To accept the Operating Protocol for the North Wales Economic Ambition Board subject to confirming rights for the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer to report directly to the North Wales Economic Ambition Board as and when required.

## **DISCUSSION**

The report was submitted and it was stated that its main purpose was to proceed with the Governance programme. A discussion followed about the individual recommendations contained in the decision.

An appropriate venue for the meetings was discussed with the intention of having a central location. It was noted that the next meeting had been arranged in Conwy. It was noted that a time would not be noted in the protocol, rather a decision was made that the meeting would aim to start at 1pm, stressing that there was flexibility in terms of the time. The appointment of the Chair of the Business Delivery Board as an adviser to the Economic Ambition Board was discussed and agreed upon.

It was noted that, of the key themes, Transport and the Digital Plan had been prioritised as the first sub-committees to be established. It was added that a further discussion was needed on the matter in order to agree plans to establish the sub-committees in terms of membership and reporting back to the Ambition Board.

Attention was drawn to the Operational Protocol for the Joint-committee which sets the foundation and timetable for meetings and reports as well as certainty regarding the direction of the Board.

Observations arising from the discussion

- A discussion ensued regarding the key themes that were prioritised and it was noted that a further discussion was needed in the executive group and to consider a timetable.
- Attention was drawn to the Ambition Board reports being submitted to the Executive Group a fortnight prior to the meeting, noting that reports from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer should not be included in this

arrangement and that they would be able to submit their reports directly to the Board.

## **6. A GROWTH DEAL FOR NORTH WALES - DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The report was submitted by Iwan Trefor Jones

### **DECISION**

To approve the Implementation Plan as a basis for further negotiations with the UK and Welsh Governments on a potential Heads of Terms agreement for a North Wales Growth Deal subject to incorporating the following adaptations in the Plan:

1. Flexibility in terms of time-frame, expenditure portfolio and project priorities in Section 7 of the Implementation Plan based on their maturity and affordability.
2. Flexibility on the financing package from both Governments in order to implement the projects in the Implementation Plan.
3. Add a timetable for establishing July 2019 as the date for agreeing Heads of Terms for both Governments.

### **DISCUSSION**

The report was submitted noting that the purpose of the Implementation Plan was to highlight the Ambition Board's proposal as well as the context and growth vision. It was explained that the document had been created in collaboration and had been approved by the Executive Group. It was added that the plan brought together the main issues, including the time-scale of the projects, outline business cases and programme office arrangements. It was explained that the Implementation Plan would highlight to UK Government and Welsh Government that the projects were exciting and that there were effective arrangements in the region.

Attention was drawn to Wylfa, noting that the Plan had given full consideration to Wylfa together with the next steps which would need to be taken. It was added that the role of businesses could be seen in full now in the Plan, with a Champion from the Business Sector assigned to every project.

It was noted that the Outline Business Cases presented evidence for all the projects as part of the Implementation Plan. It was noted that a meeting had been held the previous week with the North Wales Business Delivery Board to discuss all the projects noting outcomes and concerns and highlighting the relationship between the Private Sector and the Ambition Board. In addition, the need to proceed with some projects was stressed.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that a meeting had been held with the North Wales Business Delivery Board and the constructive discussions held there were outlined. It was explained that group members felt positive that much of the work had been done. It was noted that momentum needed to be raised and projects developed, noting the importance of developing employment in the first years. Looking at the budget, it was explained that the Board was happy that more funding was going to delivering the Sites and

Property theme. It was added that additional funding would be needed to deliver the Digital theme. It was outlined that key businesses were now part of the deal and therefore the Board believed that a second advisory board was not needed. It was emphasised that further work needed to be undertaken to communicate and build the confidence seen in the region.

- Pride was expressed that businesses wanted to be part of the deal, something which had caused concern at the beginning of preparing the deal.
- The need for projects to proceed now in order to retain the credibility of the entire deal was discussed. It was noted that challenges would arise, but clear leadership needed to be displayed to move projects forward. It was added that every project did not need to move at the same pace, and that the time-frame of the projects was flexible and could therefore be developed when they were ready.
- The importance of the Ambition Board giving a time-frame to UK Government and Welsh Government was stressed, in order to reach Heads of Terms agreement by July and ensure that projects were proceeded as some themes, such as Transport, were ready for the operational steps.
- A question was asked regarding whether there would be objective criteria for any further implementation/prioritisation of projects and whether there would be an opportunity to invite full business cases.
- It was also questioned whether work had been carried out to contact house builders directly - it was noted that contact had been made with them but further work needed to be done.
- The need to move ahead with the Implementation Plan was highlighted, and to ensure that North Wales Growth was on Welsh Government's agenda.
- It was added that there was a need to communicate the work that the growth vision was undertaking with all elected members in the region, so that they would all be aware of the Deal

## **7. 2019-20 BUDGET**

The report was submitted by Dafydd Edwards

### **DECISION**

- I. To accept and adopt the Economic Ambition Board's Budget for 2019/20, which is split to show the Programme Management Office, Accountable Body Support Services and Joint-Committee costs.
- II. To approve the arrangements and finance for Gwynedd Council to deliver the Accountable Body functions as set out in the report.
- III. To delegate the authority to the Programme Director and Gwynedd Council's Section 151 Officer to implement the budget approved.
- IV. To approve transferring the underspend from the former shadow arrangements to the

Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee.

- V. To approve transferring the underspend at the end of the 2018/19 financial year to an earmarked reserve that will be available to fund one-off costs in future years.

## **DISCUSSION**

The report was submitted noting the need to approve the budget and the recommendation submitted. It was noted that 2019/20 would be the first full budget year of the Joint-committee and specific attention was drawn to the budget headings. It was noted that only three posts had been funded within the cost of the Programme Management Office and that a small amount of funding was available for Property. It was noted that as no decision had been made about the location of the Programme Management Office, costs could change accordingly. It was added that the budget for the Programme Management Office presumed that services would need to be bought in in order to plan and develop projects.

It was noted that the cost for the Support Services of the Accountable Body was a conservative figure, and that a high proportion of the budget was directed towards the Finance Department. It was added that this budget included information technology costs for information technology equipment and support for the three posts in the Programme Management Office. It was added that costs could change depending on the location etc.

It was noted that the Partners' Contribution (Others) was a contribution by the six Councils and that the heading had been changed in order to simplify the budget. The Joint-committee was asked to adopt the budget in order to be able to proceed.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- A request was made for a detailed breakdown of the support costs of the Finance Department, as the figure of £105,000 appeared high. It was noted that a detailed copy would be sent to the members in the coming days.
- A request was made for a report on the top tier cost of each heading, to ensure that the level available for the top tier was accurate, but it was explained that there would be more clarity about the matter when looking at the business case models over the coming three months.

## **8. UPDATE ON THE ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The report was submitted by Iwan Trefor Jones

### **DECISION**

To approve the RAG status (Red, Amber, Green) on all actions within the Work Programme, noting that two actions under the Heads of Terms heading noted below will change from amber to red.

- Challenge sessions with Ministers from UK Government and Welsh Government
- Formal approval to Heads of Terms for the Growth Deal.

Modify the timetable and the responsibility for some tasks in the Work Programme, in

accordance with the explanation in section 4.3 and 4.4 of the report.

## **DISCUSSION**

The report was submitted, noting that it provided details about the status of each element of the work programme. It was added that the RAG status (Red, Amber, Green) highlighted the opinion of the Executive Group. Attention was drawn to the tasks scheduled for Quarter 1 but would not be completed within the time-frame. One of these was the challenge sessions with Ministers from UK Government and Welsh Government. It was noted that assurances were needed that these challenge meetings would be held.

It was explained that a request had been received to submit a project to the LFFN (Local Full Fibre Network) which had now been approved and that schemes were in place in order to secure additional funding. It was added that the document was being worked on regularly and the Lead Director would report to the Board in order to be entirely open if there were any slippages in the projects.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that the report explained the development and obstacles within the Deal.
- It was noted that the main concern was the time-frame for formal approval of Heads of Terms, and the frustration this caused the Board. It was added that the colour for this point should be changed from amber to red in order to ensure that a time-frame was in place. It was explained that it would be a good idea to send a letter to both Governments providing the Ambition Board's time-frame to reach Heads of Terms.
- It was explained that discussions would be held regarding the Trawsfynydd location and it was noted that it would be possible for this project to have a different governance arrangement from the others. Despite discussions to develop Trawsfynydd, it was noted that Wylfa needed to be supported also, in terms of location and opportunities.

## **9. NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD PROGRAMME DIRECTOR**

The report was submitted by Dilwyn Williams - Accountable Body Chief Executive

### **DECISION**

It was decided that:

- I. A scheduled meeting of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board will agree on a short list of candidates to be invited for further consideration.
- II. All short-listed candidates will be invited to attend a Professional Assessment Centre. The Assessment Centre will be led by an external assessor used by the Accountable Body for appointments to senior posts. The assessor will provide a written report of each candidate's performance.
- III. Formal interview of short-listed candidates at an additional meeting of the Board to be arranged with feedback from the Assessment Centre to be provided at the

meeting prior to the appointment.

- IV. Following a job evaluation, it was agreed that the post will be advertised with a salary of £86,000 to £96,000 with the flexibility of a market addition should an exceptional candidate apply.

## **DISCUSSION**

The report was submitted noting that the Board had already noted that it was eager to appoint as soon as possible and to ensure that the recruitment process was effective and robust. It was noted that the post had now been evaluated in line with the Gwynedd Council procedures with a salary of £86,000 to £96,000.

Attention was drawn to the recruitment procedure asking which steps the Board wished to take in terms of advertising and short-listing.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was expressed that the salary was fair, but the need to be flexible with the salary was added and it was noted that market supplement would be considered should an outstanding candidate apply.
- It was noted that the Ambition Board needed to create a short list at a scheduled meeting.

The meeting commenced at 13:10 and concluded at 14:50

**CHAIRMAN**