

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

24 NOVEMBER 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

REGIONAL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR SOUTH EAST WALES AND DRAFT EUROPEAN PROJECT PROSPECTUS

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an update on the Regional Strategic Framework for south-east Wales and project prospectus for the 2014 – 2020 European funding programmes.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The Regional Strategic Framework for South East Wales (“Delivering A Future With Prosperity”) and the European project prospectus for 2014 - 2020 directly support the Council’s corporate priority themes as follows:

- Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017: Priority One – Working Together To Develop The Local Economy;
- Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017: Priority Two – Working Together To Raise Ambitions and Drive Up Educational Achievement.

- 2.2 The 2014 - 2020 European programmes will also be particularly important in providing funding opportunities to help meet the priorities within “Fit for the Future”, the 2008 – 2021 regeneration strategy for Bridgend County.

3. Background

- 3.1 At its meeting of 10th December 2013, Cabinet endorsed the Regional Strategic Framework, as recommended by the South East Wales Regional Partnership Board, and a draft European project prospectus.

- 3.2 The Regional Strategic Framework (“Delivering A Future With Prosperity”) set out a vision for economic development in south-east Wales of **“a thriving region, visible internationally and distinctively Welsh”** delivered through the strategic priorities of:

- place;
- business support and development;
- people and skills.

- 3.3 The regional project prospectus outlined a series of collaborative proposals for economic development activity with a view to seeking funding support from the next round of European programmes 2014 – 2020. It was developed through task groups involving officers from each of the ten local authorities in South East Wales under the direction of the South-East Wales Directors of Environment and Regeneration (SEWDER). The SEWDER task groups were tasked with continuing

work to refine and prioritise the proposals across the following themes:

- business support and development;
- social enterprise;
- renewable energy and energy efficiency;
- transport
- ICT;
- urban regeneration;
- skills, worklessness, and young people;
- rural development

3.4 For this programming period 2014 – 2020, around £1.7 billion of EU grant aid is available to the West Wales and Valleys area for business support, infrastructure, low-carbon economy, and labour market interventions. The new EU Structural Fund programmes will support economic growth and jobs and strategic interventions will be delivered through a mix of national and regional projects.

4. Current situation / proposal

4.1 The Regional Strategic Framework features agreed priorities to complement and support Welsh Government policies and programmes in relation to tackling poverty, developing skills, implementing physical regeneration initiatives, and securing business development, affordable housing, efficient and accessible transport, and excellent connectivity in its widest sense.

4.2 Since December 2013, SEWDER have sought to develop the strategic priorities within the Regional Strategic Framework, and have contributed to a number of key activities, including:

- identifying priority business clusters for support;
- preparation of an economic baseline study;
- establishment of the cross-sectoral South-East Wales Learning, Skills and Innovation Partnership;
- development of a regional employment and skills plan;
- production of a prospectus of renewable energy projects for local investment;
- assessing regional priorities for EU-funded national projects.

4.3 SEWDER have also been considering how the Regional Strategic Framework could influence the direction and priorities of other major regional initiatives, including the Cardiff City Region and City Deal. This was the subject of a report to Cabinet on 14th July 2015. At this meeting, Cabinet endorsed the preparation of a regional growth plan, based on an update of the South-East Wales Regional Framework, to contribute to the current Cardiff Capital Region/City Deal initiatives.

4.4 Based on its endorsement by all 10 individual authorities, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and local authorities have worked with the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) to embed the strategic priorities of the Regional

Strategic Framework into the future European programmes 2014 – 2020 by linking them to the key economic opportunities identified in the south-east Wales regional chapter of WEFO's Economic Prioritisation Framework.

4.5 With regard to the development of the European project prospectus, **Appendix 1** summarises regional proposals being taken forward for European funding support as a result of the work of the SEWDER task groups. Overall, the European project prospectus has been progressed in part with mixed outcomes, as set out below:

- a package of employment support projects are being taken forward for European Social Fund (ESF) grant aid with Bridges Into Work 2 being the first local government approval under the 2014 – 2020 EU programmes and the Inspire 2 Achieve and Inspire 2 Work projects close to approval;
- the Bridgend local development strategy under the Rural Development Plan (RDP) for Wales has been approved with a funding allocation of £1.886 million;
- Bridgend County projects have been prioritised for support under Visit Wales's Attractor Destinations programme and Welsh Government's Building for the Future programme;
- WEFO has turned down the Local Investment Fund (LIF) and South-East Wales Community Economic Development (SEWCED) programme for continuation funding from the EU Structural Funds to support local businesses and social enterprises;
- regional transport proposals are in place but are not to be submitted to WEFO because transport elements of the European programmes are to be delivered through Welsh Government operations;
- no collaborative regional proposals for ICT or energy could be identified for submission (although Bridgend CBC is submitting its own application for the Smart Systems and Heat initiative as a pilot project).

4.6 Within this Council, a cross-directorate working group led by the Corporate Director Communities and facilitated by the Regeneration Funding Team will continue to co-ordinate the development and delivery of European-funded projects to ensure that they build on the successful delivery of current regeneration programmes and link to strategic priorities at both a regional and local level.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

5.1 This report raises no specific issues for the Council's policy framework and procedure rules. Future implementation of the Regional Strategic Framework and the development of collaborative projects would be subject to addressing the Council's corporate priorities and complying with its procedure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no Equality Impact Assessment Implications as a result of this work.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 Whilst there are no immediate financial implications as a result of this report, the relevant Corporate Director will report back to Cabinet on the collaborative projects

in Appendix 1 as and when appropriate.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 Endorse the progress in developing the Regional Strategic Framework for South-East Wales and the European Project Prospectus, including the collaborative projects set out in Appendix 1.
- 8.2 Authorise Council officers to continue working up the collaborative project applications for European funding support under the 2014 – 2020 programmes, and the relevant Corporate Director to report back to Cabinet as and when appropriate.

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Background documents

1. Regional Strategic Framework for South-East Wales and Draft European Project Prospectus, Report of Corporate Director Communities, Cabinet, 10th December 2013;
2. Delivering A Future With Prosperity, South-East Wales Regional Strategic Framework, WLGA South-East Wales Regional Partnership Board, 14th October 2013;
3. European Programmes 2014 – 2020: South-East Wales Region, WLGA South-East Wales Regional Partnership Board, October 2013;
4. Regional Economic Development Cardiff Capital Region City Deals, Report of Corporate Director Communities, Cabinet, 14th July 2015.

APPENDIX 1: LOCAL GOVERNMENT EUROPEAN FUNDING PROPOSALS – SOUTH EAST WALES

Fund	Title	Project Description	Lead Beneficiary	Local Partner	Status of Application
ESF	Bridges Into Work 2	Engage, support and prepare the economically inactive, including the long-term unemployed, in the most deprived areas outside of the Communities First cluster areas, to acquire the appropriate skills to become job ready and gain sustainable employment. ESF allocation of £0.973 million to Bridgend CBC.	Torfaen CBC	Bridgend CBC	Approved
ESF	Inspire 2 Work	To provide tailored support for young people aged 16 – 24 with complex needs to address and overcome barriers. This will result in young people gaining valuable qualifications, entering further learning and ultimately gaining employment.	Blaenau Gwent CBC	Bridgend CBC	Business plan
ESF	Inspire 2 Achieve	Early intervention targeted at those most at risk of becoming NEET across the 11 - 24 age range, building on the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework. Will also provide individually tailored support to young people with learning disabilities/ASD that will address barriers to engagement and social inclusion, increase participation in learning, volunteering and employment opportunities (formerly Real Opportunities).	Blaenau Gwent CBC	Bridgend CBC	Business plan
ERDF	Smart Systems & Heat	Delivery of two demonstration projects to test the technological and economic feasibility of local energy systems to reduce energy use, cut carbon emissions, and keep residents warm and comfortable. Project is part of a UK government-sponsored pilot programme to be delivered in Bridgend county, Newcastle and Greater Manchester.	Bridgend CBC	Bridgend CBC	Pre-plan discussions
ERDF	Attractor Destinations	Delivery of a small number of regionally prioritised strategic tourism infrastructure projects to help raise the quality and perception of destinations in Wales and encourage business investment and employment growth within the region's tourism sector. Porthcawl package agreed as one of three priorities for south-east Wales.	Visit Wales	Bridgend CBC	Business plan
ERDF	Building for the Future	Assist in the regeneration of town centres through acquisition, refurbishment or re-development of unused buildings/land whilst creating jobs and growth and contributing to tackling poverty agenda. Cambrian House/Wyndham House (Bridgend) and Maesteg town hall received high priority rating as part of south east Wales programme.	Welsh Government	Bridgend CBC	Business plan
EAFRD	LEADER (RDP)	Delivery of new Local Development Strategy (with RDP funding allocation of £1.886) to be overseen by the <i>reach</i> Local Action Group (LAG) comprising local community members representing the public, private and voluntary sectors. <i>reach</i> LAG will work with rural communities in the eligible areas of Bridgend county to develop projects meeting the objectives of the Local Development Strategy.	Bridgend CBC	Reach LAG	Approved