

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

**CABINET EXECUTIVE
14th March 2017**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Tony Thomas
Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning

SUBJECT: Growing Mid Wales

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the current status and activities of the Growing Mid Wales (GMW) partnership, and inform them of proposed activities and potential resource implications for 2017.
- 1.2 The report also notes that the current partnership working for transportation under the TraCC arrangements, which Powys has an Inter- Authority Agreement with Ceredigion and Gwynedd (Meirionnydd area). The work of this partnership will now report via the Growing Mid Wales Connectivity and Infrastructure Working Group which Members are asked to endorse

2. Proposal

- 2.1 Key stakeholders, including Powys County Council, were encouraged to come together and form the Growing Mid Wales Partnership by the previous Welsh Governments Economy Minister Edwina Hart. The Partnership seeks to provide a strategic focus and lead for the economic development of the Powys and Ceredigion areas, and has been meeting quarterly since early 2015.
- 2.2 The partnership comprises of representative bodies from across the private, public and voluntary sector in mid Wales, and the chairmanship rotates between the leaders of Ceredigion and Powys County Councils. It is supported by a small officer group, part of which is funded with support from ESIF via the Mid Wales Regional Engagement Function.
- 2.3 The partnership is developing quickly and already forms the key arrangement for economic development and strategic transport working across the Mid Wales region. Furthermore, the partnership is seeking to influence regional skills issues and other related issues which will support economic development.
- 2.4 The speed of this development has been partly in response to the WG Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government's proposals for

local government reform, in which he advocates a 'two footprint model'¹ – with one footprint based on regional economic partnership arrangements and covering strategic transport, land-use planning and economic development and another footprint based on health board boundaries for services such as social services and public protection.

- 2.5 The white paper detailing this approach 'Reforming local government: Resilient and renewed' was published on the 31st of January 2017. Formal consultation on the paper will close on April 11th 2017. In the paper, regional economic development is identified in 'the list of functions to be carried out on a mandatory and systematic basis'. In the paper, the Welsh Government also seeks views on what specific functions might be exercised on a regional basis to contribute to the economic development of regions, and whether or not the geography of proposed regional arrangements for these functions offer the most effective structure 'to secure economic prosperity'. In the document, the Growing Mid Wales area is listed as a 'sub-region' under the wider umbrella of the Central and South West Wales Joint Governance Committee area, along with the Swansea Bay City region. If such a structure was to be implemented, future governance arrangements will be critical to ensure the needs of the Growing Mid Wales region are recognised and not subsumed. The Chief Executive is preparing the Council's response to this white paper.
- 2.6 2017 will see a rapidly changing policy and funding landscape. Developments that will likely have implications for the work of Growing Mid Wales include;
- Implications of EU Transition, especially any potential replacement of Structural Funds and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
 - The Welsh Government's development of four umbrella strategies meeting the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act's seven goals
 - A new Economic Development Strategy for Wales, accompanied by a new Infrastructure Commission and new National Development Framework
 - The development of an Industrial Strategy by UK Government (BEIS)
 - The further emergence of City Deals and Growth Deals in Wales
 - Local Government reform in Wales (please see above)
- 2.7 A work plan for 2017 was put forward at the recent Growing Mid Wales Partnership meeting held on the 6th of January. Key actions identified for the first half of 2017 included;
- Planned meetings with the WG Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs and Minister for Skills and Technology
 - Engagement with key stakeholders to understand fully the BEIS Industrial Strategy approach, and develop a Mid Wales region response

¹ Welsh Government, White Paper – Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed (31st January 2017)

- Develop a regional Strategic Development Plan in line with proposed Welsh National Development Framework
- Progress Cross border cooperation / activities, including sector-specific work with Marches LEP and a second joint summit
- Establish a private sector engagement group

2.8 At this point in time the Mid Wales Regional Engagement Team, which support the Growing Mid Wales Partnership, are leading on the production of a regional response to the Call for Evidence for a new Welsh National Development Framework, with the long term aim of developing a regional Strategic Development Plan. Consultation has been ongoing since the start of 2017 and has included both partnership members and wider stakeholders in the region. A proposed response is due to be discussed at the next GMW Cross Sector Working Group on the 15th February, before being circulated to wider members with a view to being considered by the Chair and Vice Chair of GMW at the start of March. This regional approach taken by GMW to a national planning policy issue is reflective of the proposed regional approach to strategic land use planning as detailed in the recent Welsh Government white paper on local government reform.

2.9 Given the evolving landscape it is natural the full extent of the work required for the whole of 2017 is not known at present and will change in response to policy and funding decisions made by both Welsh and UK Government; some in direct response to EU transition and others through new policy initiatives. However, some of the key actions identified for 2017, especially the production of a regional Industrial Strategy and regional Strategic Development Plan, will require substantial additional resources and specialist skills and knowledge.

3. One Powys Plan

3.1 The Growing Mid Wales partnership has the potential to contribute to several objectives of the One Powys Plan, namely;

- Stronger Communities
- Transforming Learning and Skills
- Organisation and Partnership Development

3.2 Furthermore the Growing Mid Wales partnership and its Framework for Action is closely aligned with the strategic objectives and ideas listed in the new Powys Economic Development Strategy, a key output of the Stronger Communities Programme.

4. Options Considered/Available

4.1 Three delivery models were considered by TraCC and presented as options to the Growing Mid Wales Partnership meeting on the 6th of October 2016;

A) Reduce the number of TraCC Management and Board meetings from four to two per annum.

B) Implement a new structure for meetings and reporting of activity

- i) An officer only level group meeting for TraCC engagement to discuss operational and policy level collaboration (GMW Connectivity and Infrastructure Group).
- ii) An annual TraCC Meeting for Council Members of TraCC Board (In order to keep the inter-authority agreement on collaboration active) and ensure good governance.
- iii) Bring TraCC and GMW Partnership together once a year (Annual Regional Transport Day/ Meeting) focusing on improving strategic communications, accessibility and Infrastructure across the GMW region.
- iv) The GMW Partnership meetings would have a report from the Growing Mid Wales Connectivity & Infrastructure Working Group each quarter.

C) Retain four management group meetings and four Board meetings each year.

4.2 The paper produced by TraCC recommended Option B to be implemented for several reasons. It was felt important to maintain at least one formal board meeting each year, in order to ensure both appropriate governance and compliance with inter-authority agreements. It was also felt that strategic infrastructure and connectivity issues were pertinent to the role and remit of both TraCC and the officers supporting Growing Mid Wales, and there was a potential for duplication of activity. Furthermore, aligning strategic transport planning activity as part of the Growing Mid Wales partnership arrangements would consolidate functions in line with the then anticipated Welsh Government White Paper on Local Government reform.

4.3 Option C was dismissed as it was felt maintaining the existing format of the TraCC Management Group and Board meetings with at least four meetings of both bodies per annum was resource-intensive for both Council Members and for senior officers.

5. Preferred Choice and Reasons

5.1 The report recommends that Cabinet continue to support the Growing Mid Wales Partnership and the development of the economy in rural Mid Wales.

5.2 The report also recommends that Cabinet support the consolidation of TraCC as part as part of the Growing Mid Wales economic partnership (Option B), where TraCC will continue to function as the Growing Mid Wales Infrastructure and Connectivity Group. In addition to rationalising resources, aligning strategic transport planning activity with Growing Mid Wales demonstrates progress in consolidation of functions in line with

the economic footprints as detailed in the Welsh Government's White Paper on Local Government reform.

6. Sustainability and Environmental Issues/Equalities/Crime and Disorder,/Welsh Language/Other Policies etc.

6.1 At this point in time, the Growing Mid Wales Partnership is not responsible for any major pieces of work or projects which may have an impact on the policy areas listed above. Equality Impact Assessments, and any other assessments deemed necessary, will be undertaken on a regional basis as decisions are brought forward in the future.

6.2 All official written material relating to the Growing Mid Wales partnership is produced in both English and Welsh and complies with the Welsh Language Standards

7. Children and Young People's Impact Statement - Safeguarding and Wellbeing

7.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

8. Local Member(s)

8.1 This is a county-wide initiative.

9. Other Front Line Services

9.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report

10. Support Services (Legal, Finance, Corporate Property, HR, ICT, Business Services)

10.1 The Professional Lead-Legal has no comment, on a legal services basis, to make on the recommendation in this report.

10.2 Finance Business Partner notes the context of the report and supports the economic development and strategic transport working across the mid Wales region. The service has confirmed that there is no additional funding requirements at this stage.

11. Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc.

11.1 Given the potential the Growing Mid Wales partnership has to contribute to the objectives of the One Powys Plan, Members may wish to consider the need to report minutes of the Growing Mid Wales Partnership to the Powys Local Service Board.

12. Corporate Communications

12.1 No proactive communication action required at this stage.

13. Statutory Officers

The Strategic Director Resources (S151 Officer) notes the comments made by finance.

The Monitoring Officer has commented "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report."

14. Members' Interests

The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If Members have an interest they should declare it at the start of the meeting and complete the relevant notification form.

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
Cabinet continue to support the Growing Mid Wales Partnership and the development of the economy in rural Mid Wales.	To rationalise resources, aligning strategic transport planning activity with Growing Mid Wales demonstrates progress in consolidation of functions in line with the economic footprints as detailed in the Welsh Government's White Paper on Local Government reform.
Cabinet support the consolidation of TraCC as part of the Growing Mid Wales economic partnership.	

Relevant Policy (ies):			
Within Policy:	Y	Within Budget:	Y
Relevant Local Member(s):			
Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Professional Lead for Regeneration		
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	1st April 2017		
Contact Officer Name:	Tel:	Fax:	Email:
Jan McDonald	01597 826517		Jan.McDonald@powys.gov.uk

Background Papers used to prepare Report: