

WEST OF ENGLAND PARTNERSHIP

8th DECEMBER 2006

Report by Chief Executive

WEST OF ENGLAND: DRAFT ECONOMIC STRATEGY AND DELIVERY PLAN

Purpose of Report

1. To submit the draft Economic Strategy and Delivery Plan to the Partnership for comment and to request the Partnership to agree the draft Strategy and Delivery Plan for consultation with stakeholder organisations.

Background

2. The Economy and Skills Group considered several drafts of the proposed West of England Economic Strategy and Delivery Plan at informal 'workshops' before agreeing a draft for consultation at the meeting of the Group held on 7th November 2006. This draft with several amendments suggested by members of the Group, is recommended to the Partnership for consultation with stakeholders.

The draft West of England Economic Strategy and Delivery Plan

3. The draft Strategy and Delivery Plan are attached. They seek to show how the 'Vision' of the local economy in 2026, as agreed by the Partnership, is to be delivered and 'key challenges' addressed. The Strategy offers long-term strategic direction to the job creation and training activities of the local councils, other public agencies, business and other interests. It is proposed that it will be refreshed at 3-year intervals. The Delivery Plan deals with the short-term and the implementation of the Strategy, setting out the specific initiatives to be prioritised over the next 3 years and the partners charged with lead responsibility for their delivery. It is proposed that it will be reviewed annually.
4. The range of activity embraced by the draft Strategy and Delivery Plan is comprehensive. It reflects the diverse responsibilities of the organisations that comprise the Partnership and their commitment to working jointly towards the delivery of the 'Vision'.
5. The Strategy will assist the implementation of the Regional Economic Strategy, guide the initiatives of the South West Regional Development Agency and support the case for regional, national and EU funding bids. At a later stage and before final approval by the Partnership, the Strategy

and Delivery Plan will provide the basis for agreeing common economic development outcomes and targets under local area agreements.

6. The draft Strategy is expressed in terms of objectives and delivery initiatives that respond to the key challenges arising in considering the performance of the local economy. Objectives and delivery initiatives are arranged under some 7 themes as follows.

Business competitiveness, productivity and support

A comprehensive, co-ordinated business advice and support service is proposed that meets the particular sectoral and regeneration requirements arising in the West of England, supported by a comprehensive property and location handling service. Innovation and the transfer and application of new technologies are to be promoted and both local and regional sourcing and international trade encouraged.

Skills and workforce development

Improved working between employers, training providers and local communities is proposed in order to clarify training and skill requirements supported by more investment and greater flexibility and responsiveness in training provision and improved guidance and advice services. Raising educational attainment and basic skill levels, and higher graduate retention rates, are to be pursued. Young people are to be given more help in transferring from education to work.

Business sites and premises

A range of initiatives are proposed ranging from providing listings of sites and premises available to reviewing employment land allocations and preparing development briefs and partnerships.

Infrastructure, regeneration and the environment

Support is given for improving connectivity by promoting the implementation of the joint Local Transport Plan, especially proposals for improving the accessibility of the main business locations and to the wider UK. Support is given to airport and port growth, improving urban facilities and the main city and town centres, and to regeneration schemes and improving the rural economy.

Tourism

Support is given to improving accessibility by promoting the implementation of the Joint Local Transport Plan, especially schemes to improve the access of the main business locations and to the wider UK. Support is also given to airport and port growth, improving urban facilities and the main centres, regeneration schemes and improving the rural economy.

Promotion and influence

Support is given to raising the profile of the sub-region by preparing targeted inward investment strategies and marketing campaigns and by ensuring that government and other influential bodies recognize and respond to issues arising in the West of England.

Monitoring and intelligence

Business and economy monitoring systems are to be improved, including requirements for skills and for business sites and premises.

7. The separate draft Delivery Plan identifies the key priority initiatives and actions required of partners over the next 3 years in order to implement the Strategy. The listed actions therefore, seek to offer more detail about how over the short-term, the initiatives of the Strategy are to be implemented and objectives pursued. It identifies partners with lead

responsibilities for the actions and the broad timescale for their implementation.

The next steps

8. The draft Economic Strategy and Delivery Plan should now be agreed for consultation with stakeholders. Stakeholders should then be invited to give full and formal consideration to the drafts with comments reported to the West of England Partnership Office by the end of January 2007 and in turn, to a meeting of the Economy and Skills Group to be held in late February. At this meeting, the Group will review the drafts in the context of the comments of partners, before agreeing final drafts for recommendation for approval by the Partnership at its meeting in March 2007.

Recommendations.

That the Partnership;

- I. Considers the attached draft West of England Economic Strategy and Delivery Plan; and,
- II. Agree the draft Strategy and Delivery Plan for consultation with stakeholders.

Contact: Tim Lansley

West of England Partnership Office, Wilder House, Wilder Street, Bristol BS2 8PH

Tel: 0117 903 6866; Email: tim.lansley@westofengland.org