

SUBJECT:	MONMOUTHSHIRE BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE – PERFORMANCE REPORT
MEETING:	Economy and Development Select Committee
DATE:	26th November 2015
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

NON-PUBLICATION

(Insert appropriate non publication paragraph if necessary)

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide a performance update on the activities of Monmouthshire Business and Enterprise (MBE).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To receive the report in evidence of activities detailed in the Monmouthshire Business Growth and Enterprise Strategy Action Plan, as reflected in the Chief Officer's Annual report for Enterprise.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 One of the Council's four priorities is 'Supporting Enterprise, Entrepreneurship and Job Creation'. In 2014 a new vision for the Enterprise Directorate was agreed: To develop and promote an enterprising culture, which builds business resilience and creates excellent outcomes for our communities. Within this vision a specific mission for MBE has been identified which is to: Build the enterprise capacity and reinvent our future.
- 3.2 In delivering this vision, Cabinet approved the [Monmouthshire Business Growth and Enterprise Strategy](#) in November 2014 and endorsed the appended Action Plan. Within the Strategy there are three pillars or objectives presenting a consolidated approach to the delivery and implementation of the Strategy:
 - Supporting Business Growth;
 - Enabling Inward Investment; and
 - Growing Entrepreneurs.
- 3.3 This Strategy and the associated annual Business Plan for MBE addresses customer needs through the provision of a programme of business support, networking and facilitation to help unlock the potential for growth in the County. In 2015/16 activities are targeted towards achieving these key priorities and maximising funding opportunities to reduce the financial burden on MCC.
- 3.4 Further to this and following the closure of the 2007-2013 RDP programme in December 2014, a new Local Development Strategy was submitted to Welsh Government in September 2014. The [Vale of Usk Local Development Strategy](#) approved by MCC Cabinet in June 2015, is a key tool in drawing down funds of £2.79M from the new 2014-2020 RDP Programme which has now been expanded to include the rural wards of Newport. MCC is the Administrative Body for the programme holding overall responsibility. Activities are directed through the newly formed Vale

of Usk Local Action Group – a local partnership based on the three thirds principle of representatives from the community, private and public sector.

3.5 In addition MBE also delivers the external strand of the Council's [iCounty Strategy](#) which includes the coordination of broadband infrastructure and ICT exploitation activities.

4. REASONS:

4.1 A summary of MBE's activities during 2015/16 to date are detailed below:

4.2 **Supporting Business Growth and Encouraging Inward Investment**

MBE continue to offer a bespoke package of business development services tailored to individual needs:

- **Business enquiry numbers are on target 48** received against an annual target of 90;
- **New business start up numbers are on track 57** against an annual target of 75;
- **Jobs created are currently 87.5 against an annual target of 200.** However, pipeline projects which include the creation of roadside service area at Raglan, a 61 bed hotel, restaurant and a drive in restaurant in Llanfoist and a further 60 bed hotel and restaurant in Monmouth, indicate that the target should be met, subject to any construction delays;
- **Jobs safeguarded figures have already exceeded target, with 121 safeguarded** against a target of 60 due to support provided to companies in relation to finance and premises; and
- **Five inward investment enquiries have been received and two investment projects secured** against a target of five, with a further three enquiries in train.

4.3 The service has very recently undergone a rebranding exercise which includes the launch of a new dedicated on line business support web portal www.monmouthshire.biz. Usage of the portal will be measured and reported at a later date.

4.4 Following a decision taken by businesses in Abergavenny in 2013 to support the development of a Business Improvement District (BID), our Business Insights Manager, James Woodcock, worked with the BID Steering Group to facilitate the Ballot which took place in July 2015, further details can be found in the [Cabinet report](#) presented in May 2015. Unfortunately the ballot was unsuccessful and in October MBE invited members of the Steering Group to participate in an online survey to capture their reflections on the process and to enable those involved to consider how they might address some of the needs identified in the BID business plan. MBE are planning to meet with the Group to discuss the outcomes of the survey and next steps in December.

4.5 In March 2015 Cabinet approved the [Broadband in Monmouthshire report](#) recommending access to ICT transformation funding to undertake digital access and ICT exploitation activities. The following outcomes have since been achieved:

- A [Digital Monmouthshire](#) web portal has been developed which is hosted as part of the www.monmouthshire.biz offer and also includes a database of tech and digital businesses in the county;
- A **SMART Communities and Digital Access Manager** has been appointed to drive forward activities associated with the external strand of iCounty;
- An **infrastructure pilot offering innovative broadband solutions** for 1600 hard to reach Monmouthshire premises is being progressed;

- **60 businesses have submitted Expressions of Interest for Superconnected Cities Vouchers** for broadband connections and 27 vouchers have been awarded, although the scheme is currently suspended and applications are below targeted levels.
 - There is an increased uptake of superfast broadband in the county.
 - **32,900 premises are now able to access Superfast Broadband** connections and Monmouthshire's current take up figures stand at 15%; and
 - A web page promoting [Skutrade](#) has also been launched. Skutrade is a pre-trade cloud based software that enables businesses to know the real-time full costs and profitability of selling products in international markets. Skutrade is being supported by MCC further to a [Cabinet report](#) presented in July 2015 which stipulates how Skutrade will help deliver the Council's iCounty and Monmouthshire Business Growth and Enterprise strategies by enabling Monmouthshire businesses to have reduced fee access to the platform.
- 4.6 Following the approval of the [Vale of Usk Rural Development Programme](#), not only are the team now in place and in full delivery mode but an additional member of the Monmouthshire Business and Enterprise team has recently been appointed. Our new **Strategic Investment and Funding Manager**, Andy Smith, is not only partly funded through the RDP to identify mainstream funding opportunities for the RDP pilot projects but is also part funded via the Council's Invest to Redesign funding to identify funding gaps within the Council's Pyramid of Plans.

4.7 Growing Entrepreneurs

Following the departure of the Business and Enterprise Manager in March a replacement was sought and MBE were pleased to be joined by Vanessa Janes-Evans, previously Young Enterprise lead for Coleg Gwent. Since joining us Vanessa has established an [Investing in Young Enterprise](#) programme. Activities include;

- Development of a **bespoke programme for Monmouthshire schools**;
- Attendance of **Student Ambassadors at the Monmouthshire Business Awards** event on the 23rd October. The Monmouthshire Business Awards are now in their fourth year of operation and succeeded in attracting over 100 entrants and 350 attendees this year;
- Follow up '**Interview with an Entrepreneur**' event with Monmouthshire Business Awards at the Shire Hall on the 30th November providing students with an informal opportunity to question high profile entrepreneurs;
- Delivery of a **Global Enterprise Challenge** in three Monmouthshire secondary schools during the week of the 16th November 2015;
- **Big Ideas Wales Roadshow in Monmouth Comprehensive** where students will be showcasing their welsh BAC projects;
- A sponsored **mini Business Awards event in March** to provide an opportunity for students to pitch their ideas to parents, teachers and local businesses; and
- Development of a **Monmouthshire Mentors Programme**.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are no additional resource implications associated with this report.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

As this is a performance report there are no significant equality impacts identified for members' consideration.

7. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

There are no safeguarding or corporate parenting implications associated with this report.

8. CONSULTEES:

Senior Leadership Team

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS: N/A

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11. CONTACT DETAILS:

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