

SUBJECT: MONMOUTHSHIRE BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE – PERFORMANCE REPORT

MEETING: Economy Select Committee

DATE: 3rd March 2016

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

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. To receive a more comprehensive assessment of progress against the Monmouthshire Business Growth and Enterprise Strategy and the Vale of Usk Local Development Strategy in June 2016 following outturn.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 In line with one of the Council's four priorities of 'Supporting Enterprise, Entrepreneurship and Job Creation', Cabinet approved the [Monmouthshire Business Growth and Enterprise Strategy](#) in November 2014 and endorsed the associated Action Plan. The Strategy hinges on three pillars namely '*Supporting Business Growth*', '*Enabling Inward Investment*' and '*Growing Entrepreneurs*' and 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 the Council.
- 3.2 Further to this the [Vale of Usk Local Development Strategy](#) approved by Cabinet in June 2015, is a key tool in drawing down £2.79M from the new 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme (RDP), expanded to include the rural wards of Newport. This Council is the Administrative Body for the programme holding overall responsibility and activities are directed through the Vale of Usk Local Action Group (LAG) – a local partnership based on the three thirds principle of representatives from the community, private and public sector.
- 3.3 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 17th February 2016 are detailed below, targets are set in accordance with annual target at year end date of 31st March 2016.

4.2 Update on '*Supporting Business Growth*' and '*Encouraging Inward Investment*' objectives

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

- **Business enquiry numbers are on target 82** received against an annual target of 90;
 - **New business start up numbers are on track 59¹** against an annual target of 75;
 - **Jobs created are currently 110.5 against an annual target of 200¹**. 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 MBE has recently undergone a rebranding exercise which included the launch of a new dedicated on line business support web portal www.monmouthshire.biz at the Monmouthshire Business Awards on 23rd October 2015. To date there have been 1657 users of the web portal with 75% classified as new users. A series of marketing activities are planned to increase traffic to the site which include an enhanced social media campaign, a 'Linked In' campaign and a bespoke media campaign via Business New Wales.
- 4.4 Following a ballot taken by businesses in Abergavenny in July 2015 not to support the development of a Business Improvement District (BID), our Business Insights Manager, James Woodcock, has been working with interested parties to consider how they might address some of the needs identified in the BID business plan going forward. Following a meeting with a small number of former BID steering group members and a representative of the 'No' campaign in December, a further meeting was held in February to discuss the promotion of Abergavenny, a key element of the BID Business Plan. Representatives from Team Abergavenny, Love Abergavenny, Abergavenny & District Tourism Association, the Town Council and the TIC attended to explore ways in which they might work more closely together both in relation to the run up to the Eisteddfod and beyond. Next steps and further progress will be reported in due course.
- 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 until May 2016;
 - An £850,000 UK Government funded **infrastructure pilot offering innovative broadband solutions** for 1600 hard to reach Monmouthshire premises will be

¹ ***Please note** – Our Partner organisation is currently unable to provide data on business start ups and jobs created due to a contract ending and resulting transition to a new contract provider. Discussion is taking place with our Partner organisation re: provision of data under the new contract however this may have a consequential impact on 2015/16 Key Performance Indicators due to a drop-off in data being available. Further discussion regarding the datasets will take place with our Partner organisation in March 2016 the results of which will be reported to this Select following outturn in June 2016.

completed in March 2016. Rural properties in targeted areas that can now access a superfast broadband service for the first time have been direct mailed by AB Internet with a short term promotional offer which includes free connections and three months free service.

- **36,400 premises are now able to access Superfast Broadband** connections and there is an increased uptake with Monmouthshire's figures now standing at 15%;
- The UK Government's Super-Connected Cities Voucher scheme was closed in October 2015. 60 Expressions of Interest were supported from local businesses and 27 vouchers were awarded. In January 2016 the Welsh Government extended its [Ultrafast Broadband Connection scheme](#) for businesses into Monmouthshire and this grant opportunity is now being promoted to local businesses.
- A web page promoting a free trial for local businesses of [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. A progress update will be provided to this Select Committee at the April 2016 meeting.

4.6 Following the approval of the [Vale of Usk Rural Development Programme](#) significant progress has been made. The coordinating LAG now has 21 members with equal representation from the public, private and voluntary sector. **Five funding applications have been received with a further ten in development.** Other activities include three community workshops which will take place throughout March; a supply chain event in February at the Big Pit promoting social media opportunities for small producers and development of a cooperation project across S E Wales to map, coordinate and shorten supply chains across the region.

4.7 Our new **Strategic Investment and Funding Manager**, Andy Smith, is part funded via the RDP to identify mainstream funding opportunities for RDP pilot projects and via the Council's Invest to Redesign funding to identify funding gaps within the Council's Pyramid of Plans. To date Andy has received 18 requests for funding and/or project advice. Current projects include:

- An **EU funded AGRI-URBAN project with Team Abergavenny** consisting of ten European member state partners sharing information and best practice in the field of Agri food production and digital innovation;
- Refocusing the Team Abergavenny's Town Centre Partnership funding to provide **free Wi-Fi to the town** with presence analytics functionality in association with the Whole Place team;
- Maximising the £1.8million ESD grant for 2016 / 2017 with the Commercial and Operations department; and
- The establishment of a **Grant Coordination group** to pool resources, share experience and expertise, and take a strategic approach to funding opportunities.

Pipeline projects include an application to the Rural Community Development Fund to Wi-Fi enable community halls in the Abergavenny area;

- **Support for three large scale European Social Fund projects** covering the four S E Wales competitiveness authorities of Monmouthshire, Newport, Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan. Inspire2Work and Inspire2Achieve aim to improve the educational attainment and employment prospects for young people (Applications submitted and approval pending). Skills@Work aims to increase the education attainment level for those already in work (report being prepared for cabinet to request permission to begin discussions with WEFO);

- **Scoping a project brief for the EU funded Urban Innovative Actions fund** offering up to 5million euro to improve jobs and skills in the local economy;
- **Supporting two applications to the BIG Lottery** funded Create your Space programme with the Youth Service and Community services; and
- **Supporting five community based applications** to improve community facilities in Severnside, Tintern, Monmouth, Abergavenny and Penallt.

4.8 Growing Entrepreneurs

Since joining us in June 2015 our Business and Enterprise Manager, Vanessa Janes-Evans, has established an [Investing in Young Enterprise](#) programme. Activities include;

- Development of a pilot **Student Enterprise Ambassador programme for Monmouthshire schools** to include support with events, establishment of enterprise zone areas and social media activities, summer work experience programme (piloted with Caldicot School) and a potential summer project with King Henry VIII School in Abergavenny for disengaged students;
- Attendance of **Student Ambassadors at the Monmouthshire Business Awards**. In its fourth year in 2015, the event attracted over 100 entrants and 350 attendees;
- **'Interview with an Entrepreneur'** event with Monmouthshire Business Awards at the Shire Hall on the 30th November 2015 which provided students with an informal opportunity to question high profile entrepreneurs;
- A **Global Enterprise Challenge** in three Monmouthshire secondary schools during the week of the 16th November 2015 which resulted in a High Impact Host award;
- **Big Ideas Wales Roadshow in Monmouth Comprehensive** where students showcased their welsh BAC projects;
- A sponsored **'Monmouthshire 2040' Investing in Young Enterprise Challenge** on the 15th March 2016 in the Council Chamber providing students with an opportunity to pitch their future business ideas to parents, teachers and local businesses;
- Facilitation of a South East Wales Welsh Bac Competition on 20th April;
- Investigation of an International ERASMUS funding application; 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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