

## **Paper for Council for Economic Renewal**

### **Options paper on future working arrangements**

#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 This paper provides the Council for Economic Renewal with a context to inform the discussion on future working arrangements at the 1 December meeting.

#### **2. Action Required**

- 2.1 The Council for Economic Renewal is asked to note the contents of this paper and provide feedback during the discussion on 1 December.

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Re-invigorating the former Business Partnership Council (BPC) model of engagement is a key commitment in the policy direction, Economic Renewal. That commitment reflects the widely held view that the Economic Summit model, so effective in marshalling a unique Welsh response during the recession, had in essence run its course. It also demonstrates that we are committed to building upon the culture and approach of early-stage engagement in the policy-making process that was a feature in the development of Economic Renewal.
- 3.2 In addition, the commitment responds to the views of many of the partners who called for a return to the former BPC model of engagement. However, whilst there was a call for a return to the previous model, it was also clear that continuing with previous BPC arrangements was not desirable. The request was clear – that we need to learn lessons and adopt best-practice from the Economic Summits and develop a more meaningful level of engagement with Government than previous BPC arrangements could offer.
- 3.3 This paper therefore builds upon the best elements of the former BPC, the lessons learnt from the Economic Summits such as the importance of an action-orientated approach, and provides a way of working for a better, more effective and strategic engagement.

#### **4. Council for Economic Renewal**

- 4.1 The new name directly links the Council with the policy direction – Economic Renewal. It is a clear indication of a fresh-start and a tangible change in the way in which we engage with each other on matters that affect them.

## **5. Membership**

- 5.1 There is general agreement that towards the end, there were too many people in attendance at the Economic Summits for them to be manageable and focussed. Much of the feedback suggests that a return to the pre-Summit membership of the former BPC would be welcomed.
- 5.2 The Welsh Ministers Business Scheme sets the minimum legal requirement for 14 external members on the BPC (2 from Social Enterprise; 5 each from Business Wales and the Wales TUC, and the Chairs of the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) and the Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB)). In practice, attendance at the former BPC was always broader than this.
- 5.3 Whilst it is appropriate that membership is broad enough to be genuinely representative, we also need to consider the experiences of the latter Economic Summits where membership became so large that at times it impeded meaningful discourse. As such we are seeking to agree an optimum membership which meets our legal requirements, is sufficiently broad, but yet maintains enough focus to facilitate genuine engagement.

## **6. Frequency of Meetings**

- 6.1 It is a legal requirement that the Council meets at least three times a year. We would consider that three meetings – one per Assembly Session, and programmed in advance would ensure that work could be appropriately planned and that there would be adequate opportunity to follow up actions at successive meetings.
- 6.2 For this to happen, the Council for Economic Renewal will need a greater degree of support, and an officials working group will be vital in strengthening and underpinning the operation of the Council. The officials working group will meet on a more regular basis than the Council and will facilitate partnership arrangements and provide the continuity and impetus to ensure the Council for Economic Renewal is as effective as it can be at its meetings.
- 6.3 Whilst we would envisage the Council for Economic Renewal meeting three times per year, we will of course also retain the flexibility to convene additional meetings in response to events or developments of major significance.

## **7. The Welsh Ministers Business Scheme (Government of Wales Act 2006)**

- 7.1 It is a requirement that the Business Scheme is subject to review. Regular review is also good practice. It is recommended that a review now be undertaken of the Business Scheme so that lessons learned

can be considered going forward. In undertaking the review we will be talking formally and on the record to all stakeholders. Given that we have such clear pointers from the experience of the Economic Summits, it is proposed that this review should be 'light touch' in approach and completed in time for it to be presented to the next meeting of the Council for Economic Renewal.

## **8. Broad and Strategic Engagement**

- 8.1 The Economic Renewal policy document places significant emphasis upon a whole-Government approach and the importance of working with the private, the third sector and local government on shared aims. There is scope for better alignment, communication and engagement with a broader these stakeholders on key strategic issues.
- 8.2 There are, for example, separate Councils dealing with the Assembly Government's relationship with the third sector and local government. These arrangements could benefit from a mechanism that facilitates greater co-ordination. To deliver that, it is proposed that the Secretariats of the Economic Renewal, Local Government and Third Sector Councils meet once in each Assembly session to discuss forward agendas and issues of mutual significance. The joint-meeting of Secretariats could also act as a trigger for calling together key individuals from across the private, third and local government sector on an ad-hoc basis in response to events or developments of major significance on the economic and social agenda of Wales.

## **Questions for the Council**

1. Does the Council agree that a more focussed approach to membership will give the Council a greater opportunity to be effective at the strategic level?
2. Does the Council consider that three-meetings per year, with work being undertaken between meetings by an officials group is an effective model?
3. What is the Council's view on how the review of the Business Scheme should be taken forward?