

Economic Development Committee EDC-18-00 (p6)

Date: 29 November 2000

Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly Building

Title : Review of Business Support and Development Services

Purpose of Paper

1. To present the first draft of the full report of the Review of Business Support and Development Services (Paper EDC-18-00(p6a)). The Committee is asked to consider this report and discuss changes it would wish to see and consider the proposals for further action.

Background

2. The Committee has been involved in the development of this report through a number of informal sessions, visits to Ireland and Brussels to meet representatives involved in economic development in other parts of the EU, and from its discussion with the agencies involved in providing services to business. A further meeting with business representative organisations has been arranged for 30 November. The current draft incorporates comments received after the meeting with economic development agencies.

3. Members are already aware of the emerging recommendations through informal consideration of the executive summary of the report.

Next Steps

4. It is proposed to pass the draft report to the Clerks of the Agriculture and Rural development, the Education and Lifelong Learning, and the Local Government and Housing Committees so their members are aware of our thinking and to ensure co-ordination with their activities, particularly in relation to business support. There will be an opportunity for views from other committees to be fed into our final discussion on 13 December.

5. Once finalised the report will be published and formally submitted to the Economic Development Minister to consider its implementation. It will be submitted for debate in plenary in the next session.

6. The Assembly has a statutory obligation under section 115 of the Government of Wales Act, 1998 to consult with business on any matters that may affect them. The protocol agreed with the Business Partnership requires a two month consultation period. The legal advice is that this duty rests with the executive rather than with the committee. It is therefore proposed that this period should commence in the New Year. The committee's views are sought on whether the plenary debate should take place after or prior to this consultation. Attached at Annex 1 are questions proposed by the Economic Minister for the consultation exercise. It is suggested that the consultation be undertaken jointly by the Minister and the Committee.

Action Required

7. The Committee is asked to consider the draft report and make recommendations on any changes to the text, the recommendations and the further consultation procedure. The committee is particularly asked to comment on the questions to be asked during a formal consultation exercise.

Committee Secretariat

-

Annex
1

Possible Questions for EDC Business Support Review

Business Connect:	<p>Would the loss of Business Connect as an independent all-Wales partnership be undesirable or is it a price worth paying to underpin the network by integrating it more closely with the WDA in terms of executive support?</p> <p>Will the proposed arrangements strengthen or weaken the partnership? Should the Business Connect Board continue at national level or be regionalised?</p> <p>How will the quality assurance of the network be delivered and by whom?</p>
Economic Policy Board:	<p>What is the optimum mix of roles and responsibilities for the Board? How should it interface with the Assembly and Assembly Committees; the Boards of Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies; the Business Partnership and others (e.g. the Employment Service)?</p>

Economic Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit:	Is there a consensus on the remit of the Unit as outlined in the report, and the proposal that it should be based in the Assembly? What should be the precise relationship between the Unit and the Board?
Strategy and Delivery:	Are there any steps that could be taken to simplify delivery which are not covered in the report?
Partnership working:	<p>How is greater coherence and co-ordination to be delivered? Which partnerships should disappear in the interests of rationalisation?</p> <p>How is synergy with the arrangements put in place for EU Structural Funds to be achieved? Should the Assembly redirect funding to take account of the revised structure?</p> <p>How can the public sector be more responsive to needs/ interests of the private sector in this regard? What should be the key elements of the Strategic Framework?</p>