

# **PAPER TO THE ENTERPRISE AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE CITY REGIONS AND ENTERPRISE ZONES**

## **Introduction**

1. The purpose of this paper is to set out written evidence on City Regions and Enterprise Zones for the Enterprise and Business Committee.
2. We have examined a range of policies and actions to support long-term, local growth and jobs. City Regions and Enterprise Zones are two of these approaches.

## **City Regions**

3. The City Regions Task and Finish Group, chaired by Dr Elizabeth Haywood, was set up in autumn 2011 to examine whether the City Regions approach could support economic development in Wales.

## **Engagement**

4. The Group held a number of meetings around Wales where it took oral evidence. In addition, the Group held a call for evidence and received over 60 responses to inform the final report.
5. Following publication of the report in July 2012, the Group held a number of regional engagement sessions around Wales and held a briefing session with Assembly Members. Dr Haywood has also met with local authority leaders to discuss this approach.

## **Report and recommendations**

6. The City Regions Task and Finish Group Report published on 11 July contains 22 recommendations.
7. The report recommends that two City Regions should be recognised, one in South East Wales and one in Swansea Bay. The Group did not find sufficient evidence for the establishment of a City Region in any other part of Wales.
8. The only area which had potential for this was North East Wales when Chester and West Cheshire was included. However, the Group found that this area lacked the sufficient critical population mass to support a City Region and that support from across the cross-border area was patchy. Nevertheless the Group did suggest several options for economic development in this area including strengthening the Mersey Dee Alliance.
9. Dr Haywood has been commissioned to take forward a specific piece of work in North Wales that will further explore the report's findings and issues raised.
10. The other recommendations were focussed on the structures to support the City Region approach in Wales. These included a number of recommendations about better collaborative, spatial and regional working which include adapting or revising the Wales Spatial Plan and the creation of regional strategic planning tiers.
11. The Centre for Cities will work with officials to invite representatives from other City Regions to come to Wales and share practice.

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### **Enterprise Zones**

12. Our Enterprise Zones are designated areas where specific incentives are offered to attract new businesses and industry to that prime location. Good progress continues to be made with Enterprise Zones in Wales. All seven Enterprise Zones are now well established, with most having been in operation for more than six months.

### **Enterprise Zone Boards**

13. The Enterprise Zone Boards have prepared their strategic objectives in plans for each of the Enterprise Zones. These are being considered by officials and are already having an impact as the Zones are developed.
14. The Boards are proving to be an effective model, with permanent governance arrangements now taking effect. Officials will continue to support the work of the Boards over the coming weeks and months.
15. Marketing plans have now been completed for the seven Enterprise Zones, including individual delivery and targeting strategies, detailed marketing propositions and planned activity. These are being used to promote the Zones in the local and international marketplaces. There is a good level of interest and we have a good enquiry pipeline across all of the Zones.

### **Enterprise Zone Offer**

16. A range of policies and actions are being aligned in each and every Zone to deliver jobs and growth. This process is being informed by the Strategic Plans of each Enterprise Zone Board, to ensure a tailored solution for each Zone not a one size fits all approach.
17. The Enterprise Zone offer encompasses infrastructure support; next generation broadband; a simplified and more efficient planning process; training and skills provision; and financial incentives such as Business Rates support and Enhanced Capital Allowances.
18. I will provide a further update on Enterprise Zones in plenary on 27 November.