

<b>Title of Report:</b>  <b>Update on the North West Strategic Growth Partnership Meeting</b>	<b>Officer Presenting:</b>  <b>Chief Executive</b>  <b>Author: Secretariat</b>
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## **1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Governance and Strategic Planning Committee with an update on the meeting of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership held on Thursday 14 December 2017.
- 1.2 It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 In April 2016, Members were advised of the considerable progress made in the establishment of the new Strategic North West Partnership arrangements (GSP 81/16 North West Strategic Partnership Working). The model is Council-led and is founded on a principle of partnership between local and central government with place-making at its core and with a focus on driving regional economic growth and investment, physical and environmental development and social and community cohesion and wellbeing across the North West in particular the Derry City and Strabane District and Donegal County Council areas.
- 2.2 At a strategic level it comprises the **North West Strategic Growth Partnership** which includes the Chief Executives of both Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council, the Mayor/Cathaoirleach of each Council and representatives from the key Government Departments, North and South with a brief in economic and regional development. This body will play a key role in supporting central government to deliver on the North West Gateway Initiative and in tracking key central government investments relevant to the growth of the North West Region.

2.3 The work and discussions of this body will be informed and acted upon by an all-Council group – **The North West Regional Development Group** – comprising both senior executive officers and Elected Members. The Regional Development Group's focus will be on advancing the three pillars of regional economic growth, regional physical development and regional community and social-wellbeing through engagement with key statutory and sectorial partners across both Council areas and in line with the strategic objectives of each Council area's Community and Strategic investment plans and priorities. Minutes from these meetings are presented to Council's Governance and Strategic Planning Committee.

### 3 Key Issues

3.1 Since adoption of the new model, the North West Strategic Growth Partnership has met on three occasions – December 2016, June 2017 and the most recent meeting in December 2017.

3.2 In November 2015 'A Fresh Start – The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan' was jointly published by the Northern Ireland Executive and UK and Irish Governments. In section 'E' of this document in relation to a 'North West Development Fund' the Irish Government stated: *It is committed to supporting the regional development work of the North West Gateway Initiative' and 'has agreed to provide funding of €2.5m to support the Initiative, which will be complimented by match funding from the Northern Ireland Executive'.*

3.3 Subsequently in late December 2015 the Irish Government provided its committed €2.5m of funding to Derry City and Strabane District Council as lead administrative Council for the fund and at the North West Strategic Partnership meeting in December 2017, delegates were informed that the NI Executive Office confirmed the release of the sterling equivalent of the €2.5m funding secured under the Fresh Start Agreement to facilitate the work of the Partnership.

3.4 At the first meeting of the Partnership in December 2016, the Chief Executives of the two Councils provided an overview of the North West Strategic Growth Plan aimed at driving forward economic, environmental and social regeneration prosperity for the region. A joint presentation made by representatives of the Department of Infrastructure (NI) and the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (IRL) outlined their commitment to collaborative working to improve and enhance connectivity for the region, as part of the Regional Development Strategy and the National Planning Framework.

- 3.5 There was recognition of the positive work that the two Councils were doing collectively to deliver a joint programme that will focus on job creation, growth and investment. There was also an acknowledgment of the commitment of all Partnership Members to help put in place specific arrangements that will allow the North West City region to maximise opportunities that exist.
- 3.6 At the second Partnership meeting in June 2017, discussions ensued around a number of key strategic priority areas for the region including critical transport infrastructure requirements, industry, the economy and the associated skills needs, and realising the regions cultural and heritage tourism potential particularly in light of the upcoming European Year of Cultural Heritage.
- 3.7 Members acknowledged that the level of positive engagement at the meeting and the willingness of all involved to work together across a number of fronts demonstrated the genuine sense of momentum among all the members of the Partnership to achieving a vision of growth and prosperity for the region.
- 3.8 The third and most recent Partnership meeting was held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017. Members were given an update on the continued collaborative work that is being done by the two Councils to continue to drive forward the economic, environmental and social regeneration and to position the region that will allow it to respond positively to the challenges and opportunities presented post-Brexit.
- 3.9 Members were also provided with details of a Joint North West Approach to Spatial Planning and Shared Area Planning by both Councils and a Public Health Agency presentation detailing how they are addressing population health needs through infrastructure and public realm design through their "Our Future Foyle" Initiative.
- 3.10 A presentation entitled Modelling a Regional Economy and the North West City Regional Dashboard project was also provided by Derry City and Strabane District Council, the International Centre for Local and Regional Development and Maynooth University, followed by a round table discussion with the various Government department officials on possible data sharing opportunities.
- 3.11 It was at this meeting that Members were informed that The Executive Office had confirmed the release of the sterling equivalent of the €2.5m funding secured under the Fresh Start Agreement to complement a similar sum already provided by the Irish Government.

#### **4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement and other Implications**

4.1 As outlined above, the Irish Government provided its committed €2.5m of funding in December 2015 to Derry City and Strabane District Council as lead administrative Council for the fund. At the North West Strategic Growth Partnership meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017, it was confirmed that The Executive Office funding of €2.5m was approved for release and that a Letter of Offer was imminent.

## **5 Recommendations**

- 5.1 Members are asked to note the considerable progress that has been made through the North West Strategic Growth Partnership.
- 5.2 The very positive regional collaborative approach by Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council, in working with The Executive Office and the Irish Government, to achieve the strategic priorities in a number of key critical areas is instrumental in bringing about investment, growth and prosperity to the North West City Region.

### **Background Papers**