

## **New Arrangements for the Council**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to update the Council on new arrangements relevant to the Council's ways of working.

### **2. Context and Change**

- 2.1 The Council is an important element of the Welsh Ministers' Business Scheme. It has a dual role in providing:
- a forum for a range of representatives from business, social enterprise and trade unions to inform and influence policy across a number of areas relevant to the economy;
  - a mechanism through which Welsh Ministers can keep social partners up to date with key and latest developments.
- 2.2 The Council and its functions operate in addition to the meetings that business organisations, the trade unions and others have with Welsh Ministers and senior Officials as part of the normal course of business.
- 2.3 The Council is a broad partnership of bodies and enables Ministers to receive views on issues relating to the economy from a wide range of perspectives.
- 2.4 However, following papers to the previous Council meetings on working arrangements, some changes are being made which will serve to refresh and strengthen working arrangements. In summary, these are:
- A change of name from the Council for Economic Renewal to the Council for Economic Development;
  - Greater engagement with post 16 employment and skills policy through the agendas for the Council and the inclusion of the wider skills voice through the establishment a formal link with the Wales Employment Skills Board;
  - The standing down of the Executive Working Group with all Council Members having an opportunity to contribute to agenda setting.
  - Separate to the Council, the formation of a Social Partner Strategy Group to provide a forum for social partners to share their experience and knowledge and contribute to the Welsh Government's strategy development.
- 2.5 Further detail on each of these changes and their rationale follows.

### **3. Change of Name**

- 3.1 The Council's existing name dates from the period that immediately followed the global financial crisis at the end of the last decade. Economic renewal no longer reflects the current position in Wales and a change of name to Council for Economic Development is more appropriate. The change of name better reflects the purpose of the Council.

### **4. Greater engagement with post 16 employment and skills policy**

- 4.1 In previous discussions at the Council, there has been a request for greater engagement with the post 16 employment and skills agenda. Given the importance of the skills agenda to economic outcomes, a formal link between the Council and the Wales Employment Skills Board will be established. This will include inviting the Chair of the WESB to join the Council and therefore bring more alignment to the structures. Greater engagement with post 16 employment and skills policy will be encouraged through future agendas of the Council.
- 4.2 Alongside inviting the Chair of WESB to sit on the Council, WESB is itself in the process of being refreshed and revised to retain a strong employer focus. Moreover, the Chairs of the Regional Skills Partnerships will sit on WESB, enabling regional skills priorities to be linked to employer needs.

### **5. Social Partner Strategy Group**

- 5.1 Whilst the Council plays an important and necessary role in fulfilling its remit as a statutory partnership representing a range of views – its frequency does not always lend itself to real time discussions.
- 5.2 During discussions at the Council and with the Executive Working Group, some members of the Council have raised this issue with Welsh Ministers. These discussions have identified the desire to establish a new group, separate from the Council meeting more frequently.
- 5.3 The Council's Executive Working Group proposed the establishment of a tripartite Social Partner Strategy Group as a means of putting in place more effective arrangements for regular and ongoing strategic dialogue between the social partners, Welsh Ministers and senior Welsh Government officials.
- 5.4 The Group has now been established comprising nine members, three drawn from Commerce Cymru, Wales TUC and the Welsh Government respectively. Wales TUC and Commerce Cymru were asked to nominate three members each. As a result the Group's membership is:

**Welsh Government**

- First Minister
- Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure
- Lead Official

**Wales TUC**

- General Secretary, Wales TUC - Martin Mansfield
- President, Wales TUC - Nick Ireland
- President Elect, Wales TUC - Mike Jenkins

**Commerce Cymru**

- Chair, Commerce Cymru – Paul Byard, EEF
- CBI Wales – Ian Price
- FSB Wales – Ben Cottam

5.5 Business organisations and Trade Unions can continue to meet with Ministers as part of the normal course of business.

**6. Executive Working Group**

6.1 The Council's Working Group has enabled more frequent meetings to take place between a smaller group of Council members and Welsh Government officials. It has also has been the vehicle through which the administrative business of the Council - such as the agreement of forthcoming Council agendas and follow through of outstanding actions – has been undertaken.

6.2 The Executive Working Group is now being stood down given the developments outlined above. The administrative function of the Working Group will be taken forward jointly by the Welsh Government and the Wales Social Partners Unit, who will consult directly with all Council Members on future agendas etc.

**7. Next Steps**

7.1 The Council is invited to note:

- a) the change of name to Council for Economic Development;
- b) the establishment of a formal link between the Council and the Wales Employment Skills Board (WESB) to include the Chair of WESB being invited to become a member of the Council
- c) that future agendas will provide the opportunity for more engagement with Further and Higher Education;
- d) the standing down of the Executive Working Group;

- e) that future Council agendas will be agreed through the Welsh Government working with the Wales Social Partners Unit who will consult directly with all Council Members;
- f) the establishment of the Social Partner Strategy Group.