Ministerial Update

Paper to Note

"Transforming Wales through Social Enterprise" Vision and Action Plan for the Social Enterprise Sector in Wales 2020-2030.

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Following the launch of the Vision and Action Plan "Transforming Wales through Social Enterprise" in Mid-July 2020 the Social Enterprise Stakeholder Group (SESG) has been developing the action plan which will support and deliver the ambitious vision for the sector; as outlined in the document. Progress has been made at an SESG level and at individual organisational level (DTA Wales, Social Firms Wales, UnLtd, Wales Co-operative Centre and WCVA). Each partner organisation has been working with Dr Sarah Evans (Independent Policy and Research Advisor) to develop the action plan. Regular conversations with Welsh Government officials from the Economy Department have also taken place.

A summary of progress with each of the Outcomes is outlined below;-

Outcome 1
More people will choose to engage with social enterprises – as customers, employees, volunteers, or leaders.

The key to this outcome is lobbying and encouraging public bodies to include social enterprises in their supply chains; the SESG are exploring a number of approaches to achieve this. An initial round table discussion, with selected Local Authorities is being considered, with a view to holding a virtual event in November.

Work is also been done with sector support agencies to ensure that the sector is ready to take advantage of public procurement opportunities.

The SESG is also exploring wider Buy Social campaigns and supporting individuals to get involved in volunteering or at Board membership level with their local social enterprises.

Outcome 2
More people will choose a social enterprise model to start a new business.

This outcome has a focus on embedding the sector within education. Work has been undertaken with Big Ideas Wales and there are plans to launch a schools Social Enterprise Challenge to tie in with Global Entrepreneurship Week in November. At a more strategic level Big Ideas Wales and the SESG are also at early stage discussions in considering the development of a Youth Social Entrepreneurship Programme. Stakeholder organisations

have also contacted Entrepreneurship Champions within the Welsh Universities and again events are being planned during Global Entrepreneurship Week.

National social enterprise support organisations are providing a range of start-up provision ranging from supporting individual social entrepreneurs (UnLtd.), those furthest from the job market (Social Firms Wales), Enterprising Solutions mentor support (DTA Wales), CCH housing programme (DTA Wales & Wales Cooperative Centre), Social Business Wales (SBW) 'New Start' programme, Renew Wales climate change action and start-ups. National support organisations continue work to develop a collaborative approach to promote social enterprise, broaden market entry points and encourage a breath of inclusivity.

Outcome 3
Policy makers will prioritise social enterprise solutions when considering how to address problems and create conditions which help social enterprises to rebuild and thrive.

Discussions with Welsh Government officials and members of the SESG have taken place with regard to this outcome and the stakeholder group are planning how to build on these initial discussions. An event with City Growth Deal and Development Partnerships is also being planned.

A future research agenda, to inform practice is also being evaluated.

Outcome 4
Social enterprises will be better connected to each other and will speak with a more unified voice.

There are a number of national, regional and sector specific social enterprise (SE) networks that already exist within Wales and contact has been made with some of the network facilitators. Through SBW new thematic networks have started for example a food network and an arts and culture network. The virtual nature of these events resulted in a pan-Wales audience and the participants were keen to explore future work/learning together. As a sector we appreciate that many thematic networks already exist and we need to make sure that our networks compliment and work with these organisations.

Outcome 5
Social enterprises will play a greater role in tackling climate change and protecting the environment.

A significant amount of work is already taking place in this arena and it is our role to emphasise what the social enterprise sector can achieve, in order to add value and promote delivery options and opportunities for this activity. A successful webinar, relating to this outcome, was held in mid-September with a range of social enterprise practitioner speakers;

this will provide a basis for future actions by SEs in this area, particularly linked to the Green Recovery.

As this is such a wide agenda, consideration is being given to forming a stakeholder sub-group comprised of representatives from the climate change action sector.

Outcome 6
Social enterprises will adopt Fair Work practices, pay the Living Wage, and increase diversity amongst their employees and volunteers.

Investigation into this outcome suggests that we have limited evidence relating to the extent of diversity in the social enterprise sector in Wales. Additional questions are planned in the next round of sector mapping; additional research in this area is also being considered. With regard to the payment of the Living Wage, the sector mapping report (2019) stated that 76% of social enterprises in Wales were paying the Living Wage.

It has to be noted that although fair work and diversity challenges are aligned, they are different. Fair work takes into account fair pay, being valued , heard, listened to, and included, whereas, diversity takes into account factors such as gender/gender-neutralism, age, religion, race, background, and that people may have things in common they are also different in many ways. With regard to the latter there are still conversations to be held to ensure this outcome maximises on all matter of equality and inclusion.

Outcome 7
Social enterprises will be better able to exploit digital technology for social good.

Progress relating to this outcome could be considered one of the few positives of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many social enterprises have moved some/all of their sales online and/or embraced virtual service delivery, where practicable.

SBW also hosted an event at the Social Enterprise World Forum Digital relating to social enterprise and Tech for Good. This will be built on during a week-long series on events at Tech Fest (12th to 16th October). The Deputy Minister will be attending the opening round-table event. A co-creation Hackathon is also planned to end the week of events.

Outcome 8
The range and value of funding options tailored to the needs of social enterprises will multiply.

It is of course recognised that these are challenging financial times. Outline discussions suggest that the sector is more willing to utilise repayable finance than the previous preference/reliance on grant-based funding. There are of course concerns about the impact of Brexit on future funding streams.

Funding gaps at certain stages of social enterprise development have also been identified and these will be elaborated in future reports to this committee. These will continue to evolve as the effects and restrictions associated with the pandemic change.

Outcome 9

Good quality specialist business support tailored to the needs of the sector will be available to everyone who needs it.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of specialist business support to the survival and rebuilding of the sector. The SESG has forwarded a short report to Welsh Government officials relating to the future of business support for the sector.

Notes:

The next round of sector mapping has been commissioned and will begin in October 2020. The work is commissioned by SBW; however, Sarah Evans has been involved in the commissioning process and will be involved in shaping and delivery of the project.

Sarah Evans was invited to speak at the Social Enterprise World Forum Policy Workshop in August, promoting the Vision and Action Plan. Members of the SESG also attended the virtual event and contributed to online discussions.

During the pandemic members of the SESG have met on a weekly basis, which has aided a cohesive response and information sharing for the sector. Such regular meetings have also allowed the dialogue relating to the action plan to progressively move forward during this challenging period. It is acknowledged that the need for such regular meetings is unlikely to continue in the longer term.