

South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

6 June 2023

Chairperson: Councillor R.Stewart

Vice Chairperson: Councillor D.Price

Councillors: P.Miller and S.K.Hunt

**National Park
Representatives:** A.Edwards and T.Jones

**Officers In
Attendance:** M.Nicholls, W.Walters, W.Bramble, G.Jones,
K.Jones, C.Moore, A.Parnell, O.Enoch,
C.Griffiths, S.Rees and C.Plowman

1. **Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair for South West Wales
Corporate Joint Committee**

RESOLVED:

That Cllr Rob Stewart (Swansea County Council) be appointed Chair, and that Cllr Darren Price (Carmarthenshire County Council) be appointed Vice Chair of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

2. **Welcome and Chairs Announcements**

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3. **Declarations of Interests**

There were no Declarations of Interests received.

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meetings, held on 24 January 2023 and 30 March 2023, were approved as accurate records.

5. **Forward Work Programme**

The Forward Work Programme was noted.

6. **Reconstitution of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee**

The Committee were provided with a report with the purpose of reconstituting the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee, which included setting out the administrative and governance arrangements for the forthcoming civic year.

The Monitoring Officer for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee made reference to the proposals within the circulated report, which would form part of the reconstitution:

- The re-establishment of the four sub committees of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee; these were noted to be Regional Transport Planning, Economic Well Being – Regional Economic Development, Strategic Development Planning and Economic Well Being – Regional Energy Strategy
- The re-establishment of the Governance and Audit Sub-Committee which would continue to be facilitated by Pembrokeshire County Council
- The re-confirmation that the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Standards Committee would be the designated Standards Committee for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee
- The re-establishment of the Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee Committee for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee
- The approval of the forthcoming meeting dates for the civic year, including the dates for all Sub Committees
- The re-confirmation of the private sector representatives, who had previously been appointed to the Advisory Board at a previous meeting of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee

RESOLVED:

That Members approve the creation of the sub-committees identified at paragraph 8 of the circulated report and the proposed

representatives appointed to the sub-committee set out at paragraphs 8 and 9 of the circulated report;

That Members approve the establishment of Governance and Audit Sub-Committee for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee as set out in paragraphs 12-17 of the circulated report;

That Members approve the designation of the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Standards Committee as the Standards Committee of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee;

That Members approve the establishment of an Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee Committee for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee as set out in paragraphs 21-27 of the circulated report;

That Members approve the timetable for future meetings for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee as set out in paragraph 28 of the circulated report;

That Members approve the extension of the advisors identified at paragraph 30, of the circulated report, for the civic year 2023/2024.

7. **Granting of Co-opted Member Status to the Chair of Regional Learning and Skills Partnership**

Members were presented with a report in regards to agreeing co-option status, for the Chair of the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership, to the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

It was stated that last year Members approved the Regional Economic Delivery Plan for the South West Wales Region. The Committee was informed that when the Chief Executives and Directors were reflecting on how this Plan was being progressed, they collectively agreed to propose to the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee, that co-option status be granted to the Chair of the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership, as they were a key part of the overall economic development endeavour within the Region; it would also provide opportunity to co-ordinate these arrangements more formally, within the Corporate Joint Committee environment.

RESOLVED

That Members agree that co-option (non-voting) status be granted to the Chair of the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership to the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee and the Economic Well

Being – Regional Economic Development Sub-Committee, subject to the completion of a co-option agreement.

8. **Investment Zone Policy Offer**

A discussion took place in regards to the Investment Zones policy offer that UK Government published, for England, in March 2023.

It was further elaborated that the policy offer that was announced in March was confined to England. However, it was noted that Welsh Government were considering whether they were going to apply a similar policy in Wales; there were currently discussions ongoing between UK and Welsh Government in regards to this matter.

The circulated report detailed an extract from the UK Government policy offer, which summarised the offer for England; the investment zone was going to be focused on specific geographic areas with a need of levelling up. It was noted that England hadn't used a competitive process for allocating the investment zones, and instead allocated based on a methodology; when in discussion with Welsh Government officials, they indicated that they would be inclined to take a similar approach in Wales, if the Minister was going to introduce it.

Officers explained that it was currently unknown if Welsh Government were minded to agree to a policy offer; however, Officers were seeking authority to start the initial thinking and dialogue around this, in order to be prepared if the policy were to be agreed for Wales. It was highlighted that it would be important to have a clear indication on how the policy offer could be incorporated into the work that was currently being undertaken in South West Wales.

Members were in agreement of the importance to show an early interest in this matter, given the opportunities that it could provide; and the need to start discussions with Welsh Government as soon as possible.

It was queried whether there was any indication from Welsh Government in regards to timescales of agreeing and delivering a policy for Wales. It was explained that Welsh Government were currently considering a policy offer, and hadn't given a timescale for when they will give their decision.

RESOLVED

That the Chief Executive be authorised to commence initial discussions with Welsh and UK Governments to explore the benefits that could accrue if an investment zone policy offer were to be allocated to South West Wales

That a letter, registering an expression of interest in the potential for an investment zone policy offer in South West Wales, be sent from the Chair of the Committee to the relevant ministers.

9. **Forecast Outturn and Pre-Audit Annual Return 2022/23**

The Chief Finance Officer provided the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee with the Forecast Outturn and Pre-Audit Annual Return for the year ended 2022/23.

It was stated that the budget for the 2022/23 financial year was set at £575,411; there had been a significant underspend of £384,824, which made the net expenditure £190,587. It was mentioned that a lot of the monies hadn't been spent due it being a year of developing the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

Members were informed that due to the income expenditure of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee being below £2.5million, Finance Officers weren't required to completed a full statement of accounts; instead, they had to ensure that an Annual Return was completed, which will then be audited externally by Audit Wales.

The Committee were briefed on the Forecast Outturn, detailed in Appendix A of the circulated report, and the following points were highlighted:

- The Accountable Body underspent by £18,236 due to audit cost being less than anticipated;
- The Governance and Internal Audit underspent by £26,250 due to minimal activity on the internal audit work;
- The post of Senior Accountant had not been filled in the financial year as this area was still in development, therefore the post was not needed at this time, which made a saving of £59,180;
- The Regional Management Office didn't utilise some of the consultancy specialist fees that were projected;
- The work relating to the Sub Committees hadn't progressed as anticipated, therefore the budget allocated to them had not been spent.

It was confirmed that the money underspent (£384,824) would be put into reserves for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee, and the usage could be drawn as and when required going forward.

Officers explained that the Committee would be presented with the audit of accounts, once received from Audit Wales.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

10. **Urgent Items**

There were no Urgent Items received.

CHAIRPERSON