

South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

27 January 2023

Chairperson: Councillor Sparks

Vice Chairperson: Councillor T.Bowen

Councillors: R.Davies, S.Pursey, M.John, E.Schiavone, P.Black and M.White

Officers In Attendance K.Jones, C.Moore, O.Enoch, C.Griffiths and C.John

1. **Chairs Announcements**

There were none.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 8th November, 2022, were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. **Budget for Financial Year 2023/24**

The Chief Executive provided a brief overview of the budget, providing detail around the current focus of the budget along with the future focus over the next 12 months. The Section 151 Officer also provided a more detailed background of the setting of the budget.

Members noted the following error within the agenda/report:

- On page 2 of the agenda pack the date should read '20 January 2023' and not '20 March 2023' as detailed.

- On page 8 of the report, paragraph 2.4, it was noted that the figure should read 140,000 and not 140,0000.

Discussions took place around the UK and Welsh Government funding that was available. Clarity was sought around the placement of this money and whether it was included within the Corporate Joint Committee Budget. It was confirmed that it wasn't directly within the Corporate Joint Committee budget and was a part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and was sitting within individual authorities. It was highlighted to the committee that the information on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to inform members that there is money available to help support particular projects.

Explanations were provided in relation to technical complications that have arisen due to the Corporate Joint Committee being its own entity and requiring section 33 powers. It was noted that there are VAT Implications along with other technical issues that are within Section 150. It was noted that officers were happy to provide a report on this in future providing further detail.

Members queried the £617,753 budget and asked what the purpose and outcomes would be of this money as the main detail of the spend was mainly around administration duties. Officers explained that the first year was mainly around setting up the entity of the Corporate Joint Committee in line with the legal requirements which has a cost. It was noted that the Welsh Government is keen to have collaborative working specifically on the following areas - Transport, Planning, Economic Development and Energy. It was noted that there is a lot of Admin involved however, it's not all admin within the budget.

Members were aware that as the Corporate Joint Committee is its own entity, it would be within Wales Audit Office remit as a separate body to ensure that the governance and the value for money of the budget is set appropriately. Therefore Members asked for clarity around the Regional Management Office as the budget figures were detailed as estimated costs and wanted reassurance that there was no potential for those costs to increase. The officers provided assurance to members and explained that the Corporate Joint Committee is within its infancy and workings of the Regional Management Group were still being finalised. Officers reassured members that the costings for the regional Management Office would be controlled and kept within costs.

It was noted that Scrutiny would regularly receive Budget monitoring reports to ensure they have sight of any costings over the next calendar year.

Officers provided reassurance to members around the Chief Executive Lead's that were detailed within the budget. It was noted that these payments for the department and not salary payments for the Chief Executives.

Members queried the decision the corporate Joint committee endorsed around option 2 – 'Do Minimum' and queried the challenges the Corporate Joint committee would have undertaken if consideration was given to take the option to suspend all CJC activities in 2023-24. It was noted that this would have had a detrimental legal and governance implication. Therefore the do Minimum option was the best option to consider to meet legal duties and to meet within the financial budget.

Clarity was sought around the consultation of the budget, it was noted that the Corporate Joint Committee agreed that there was no formal requirement for consultation on the Budget. Officers confirmed that the key Stakeholders and Section 151 officers within the individual authorities were consulted, however, it was decided that there would be no requirement for a public consultation. It was noted that the draft and agreed budget was discussed in public meetings meaning the public could put forward any representation if they wished. It was also noted that that in future the Scrutiny committee would have an opportunity to pre-scrutinise the Budget prior to the decision being made in future years. Scrutiny commended this approach and relayed their preference on pre-scrutiny for all meetings.

Members discussed what the process would be around ensuring publicity was visible around the consultation of the Corporate Plan. It was also asked that detail be explained around the projects within the Corporate Plan highlighting the regional detail that the CJC have endorsed. Officers confirmed that they were happy to include this within the next meeting where the Corporate Plan has been programmed in to the Forward Work Programme.

Following Scrutiny, the report was noted.

5. **Forward Work Programme**

The Forward Work Programme was noted.

6. **Urgent Items**

There were none.

CHAIRPERSON