

**South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Strategic Planning
Sub-Committee**

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

18 September 2023

Chairperson: Councillor S.K.Hunt

Councillors: W.F.Griffiths, D.Hopkins, A.Davies and
J.Harvey

**National Park
Representatives:** A.Edwards

**Officers In
Attendance:** N.Gandy, W.Bramble, T.Evans, P.Homes,
I.Llewelyn, R.Griffiths, H.Lucocq, L.Beynon,
C.Morris, S.Morris, S.Aldred-Jones,
H.Lavender, G.Jones, L.McAndrew and
C.Plowman

Invitees: Councillors D.Simpson and Dr S.Hancock

1. **Welcome and Chairs Announcements**

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interests received.

3. **Terms of Reference**

The Committee were presented with the Terms of Reference of the Strategic Planning Sub Committee of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

It was explained that the Terms of Reference were presented to the Corporate Joint Committee, along with the other Sub Committee Terms of Reference, in October 2022.

Members were informed that the document set out the overarching aim of the Sub Committee; along with the functions and makeup of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That Members note the terms of reference of the Strategic Planning Sub-Committee.

4. **Strategic Planning Update Presentation**

Members received a presentation in regards to the ongoing work relating to the Strategic Development Plan (SDP).

Officers provided a brief overview in regards to the governance of the Strategic Planning Sub Committee; and confirmed that the lead Chief Executive for the SDP was Pembrokeshire Council, and that the political lead was Neath Port Talbot Council.

The Committee was informed that South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee agreed to a number of priority steps in its Corporate Plan for 2023-28, which related to the SDP. It was explained that the first step was to engage with Welsh Government on the Draft SDP Manual, and to further engage with Welsh Government regarding resources; Officers confirmed that both of these actions had been completed.

The second priority noted was to prepare a delivery agreement which set out the time scales for the preparation of the SDP; with the final step being the work surrounding developing the SDP.

Officers provide Members with an indication of what actions had been completed to date:

- In December 2022, informal comments were submitted to Welsh Government in respect of the SDP Manual;
- The Welsh Government formal consultation on the SDP Manual had yet to be undertaken, as it was expected to take place during summer 2023;
- Updated Welsh Government with concerns in regards to the lack of resources to progress the SDP;
- Undertaken a Joint Local Housing Market Assessment, a Regional Viability Study, a South West Wales Strategic Flood Consequence Assessment and a National Growth Area Refinement Study.

- Working on a Nutrient Credit Trading Scheme on a regional basis, along with a Joint Economic and Housing Growth Assessment for Swansea and Neath Port Talbot;
- Re-established the Mid and South Wales Minerals and Waste Planning Group, which now meets on a quarterly basis

It was highlighted that the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee had set the Sub Committee budget for the 2023/24 financial year, at £20,000 per Sub Committee; this was reflected in the option to do minimum, for each of the work streams.

The presentation detailed the current priorities for Officers across the region in regards to the progression of the SDP; the number one priority being to liaise with Welsh Government in regards to the release of the SDP Manual consultation in order to begin the development of the delivery agreement. Another priority noted was to work collaboratively to undertake further regional studies; this will form the evidence base for the SDP in the future.

The challenges surrounding resources was raised, with particular mention of the budget and staffing pressures. It was also noted that the constituent Councils were experiencing issues in regards to recruitment of experienced planning staff, which affects the regional work relating to the SDP.

A discussion took place in regards to the National Parks, and their involvement with the development of the SDP. It was explained that National Parks had a number of obligations in terms of impact assessments, along with the Sandford Principle which set out to ensure that National Parks put nature first; it would be important to highlight this in the future development of this work stream.

Officers provided reassurances to National Park representatives, and made reference to the duties in terms of the Sanford Principle; as well as Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which related to biodiversity and nature.

Members re-emphasised the issues surrounding the resources, and asked for more information in regards to the discussions that have been taking place with Welsh Government.

The Committee was reassured that politically all Leaders across the region recognised the importance of this work stream, and were

lobbying Welsh Government and the relevant bodies in order to assist with progressing the priorities.

It was noted that Officers across the region, including the Planning Officers Society Wales, meet regularly with Welsh Government officials; this matter was included as a standing item on their agenda at their quarterly meetings as a Society, as well as at their meetings with Welsh Government. It was highlighted that Officers were honest in those discussions in terms of setting out what were considered to be the limitations in respect of the absence of funding and resources in order to be able to advance the work.

Members were informed that some of the actions that had been undertaken in terms of the cross boundary studies, which were detailed in the presentation, were required for each Councils own respective development plans; however, a lot of them were also important in terms of underpinning what will be the future regional plan. It was noted that Officers had recognised the importance of a joint working approach, and emphasised that they will continue to work closely and collaboratively across the region.

In terms of the delivery agreement, which was the initial statutory output of an SDP, Officers stated that in order to produce something meaningful, there would need to be an understanding of how it would be resourced; this was an area in which was being highlighted to Welsh Government.

A discussion took place in regards to the budget setting process of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee, for the current 2023/24 financial year, and the impact of the budget pressures. Reference was made to the analysis that has been undertaken on the costs associated with the SDP, and the potential costs beyond the current financial year; and the alignment of this with the deadlines set for completing the work. Officers confirmed that they would circulate these documents to the Committee, following the meeting.

5. **Forward Work Programme**

Members were provided with the Forward Work Programme for the Strategic Planning Sub Committee.

The Forward Work Programme was noted.

6. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items received.

CHAIRPERSON