

South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee

**(Microsoft Teams Meeting / County Hall, Council Chamber at
Pembrokeshire Council)**

Members Present:

12 September 2024

Chairperson: Councillor R.Stewart

Vice Chairperson: Councillor D.Price

Councillors: J.Harvey and A.Llewelyn

**National Park
Representatives:** A.Edwards and D.Clements

Co-Opted Members: E.Evans and N.Wooding

**Officers In
Attendance:** M.Nicholls, W.Walters, W.Bramble, K.Jones,
T.Jones, C.Moore, K.Tillman, G.Jones,
S.Davies, D.Griffiths, D.John, R.Lewis,
M.Wade, A.Williams and C.Plowman

External Advisers: L.White

1. **Welcome and Chairs Announcements**

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interests received.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 30 July 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

4. **Regional Transport Plan (RTP) Policy Framework (Draft) and
Consultation Update**

The Committee were provided with an update report on the progress of the Regional Transport Plan (RTP). The report also sought approval of the RTP Policy Framework and revised programme of work to develop and deliver the RTP.

Reference was made to the Wales Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd, 2021. It was explained that Officers had been working on interpreting the Strategy and identifying how it related to the Southwest Wales Region; the RTP Policy Framework set out the context of how Llwybr Newydd would be implemented at a regional level.

A discussion took place in regard to the timescales of delivering the RTP. Officers had previously raised concerns in regard to the timescales due to a number of influences that impacted progress. It was noted that Officers were seeking endorsement to amend the timeline, specifically, moving final submission from April 2025 to June 2025.

Members received the following updates in regard to progression of the RTP:

It was noted that a 'data book' had been produced in order for Officers to begin to understand how to prioritise schemes and such like; the 'data book' was essentially a distillation of all the information that had been collected from various sources.

Officers explained that the public consultation on the 'Case for Change' had now concluded; just over 800 formal responses had been received, all of which were currently being collated. It was noted that there had been slightly more responses received from the Swansea and Neath Port Talbot areas; however, it was the view of colleagues, conducting the consultation, that there was a representative sample. Members were informed that in readiness for the next round of public consultation, Officers would be looking to target the younger demographic.

Further to the above, it was highlighted that two key themes had emerged from the consultation; there were concerns regarding active travel elements of the Welsh Transport Strategy 2021 (Llwybr Newydd), particularly in the rural areas. The second theme noted was the availability of public transport, particularly the bus services; it was evident that the public would use bus facilities more, however there were concerns with times of operation, days of operation and costs.

A discussion took place in regard to the Wellbeing Assessment, which was progressing. It was explained that the scoping report was currently being reviewed by Officers; this will be sent out for formal consultation with the statutory consultees.

Officers confirmed that the next step in the process was to start looking at specific schemes; individual Local Authorities across the region were assisting in this step by bringing forward proposals for various schemes. It was mentioned that Officers would also be looking at a number of schemes which could potentially interface with rail and trunk road. Members were informed that at the end of this specific process, Officers will have a recommended shortlist of schemes; a workshop had been arranged with the Members of the Regional Transport Sub-Committee to discuss the schemes and priorities.

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Southwest Wales Corporate Joint Committee expressed their thanks, on behalf of all Committee Members, to the Officers across the region who had worked on the development of the RTP thus far.

RESOLVED:

1. That the verbal progress reports from officers on the RTP development workstreams be noted
2. That the Regional Transport Plan policy framework be approved
3. That the revised RTP development work programme be approved

5. **Joint Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Regional Strategic Equality Plan**

Members were provided with an update on the development of the Joint Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy which will inform the Regional Strategic Equality Plan (SEP).

It was highlighted that Members received a draft of this report at the last meeting of the Southwest Wales Corporate Joint Committee; there had been no substantive changes since this meeting, although more detail had been included in the action plan. Members were informed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had scrutinised and endorsed the report.

The Chief Executive of the Southwest Wales Corporate Joint Committee had received feedback on the draft plan from the Equality

and Human Rights Commissioners Officers; although they were content with plan, they did provide a few recommendations. It was noted that the main recommendation was to include target dates for delivery within the action plan. It was explained that this amendment could be made by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair, if Members were content. It was confirmed that Members were content for the Chief Executive to add target delivery dates to the action plan.

The Committee congratulated Officers on the work that had gone in to developing the Strategy.

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy be approved, to enable implementation of the action plan and development of the Regional Strategic Equality Plan (SEP).

6. **South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee Annual Return 2023/24**

Officers provided the Joint Committee with the Southwest Wales Corporate Joint Committee Annual Return for year ended 2023/24.

It was explained that the Southwest Wales Corporate Joint Committee was not required to complete a full statement of accounts due to the size of the turnover; if turnover was below £2.5million, there was no requirement to produce a full statement of accounts.

The Committee was reminded of the budget that was set in January 2023 (£617.7k); the circulated report summarised the position at the end of the financial year. Officers stated that the expenditure during the year was £327.2k; Welsh Government had provided £124.1k in respect of the transport grant, and each of the four constituent Local Authorities had provided a levy which totalled at £617.7k.

It was highlighted that the Outturn, detailed in Appendix A of the circulated report, showed an underspend of £458.7k against the budget with the balance being transferred to the reserves; this was primarily due to receiving the grant from Welsh Government, and the fact that the Sub Committees had underspent. Therefore, it was explained that £843,5k was the total balance being carried forward in reserves.

A discussion took place in regard to the various reports that formed part of this process, including an annual governance statement and internal audit review; it was confirmed that the internal audit review had not flagged any issues. Members were informed that external audit had also reviewed the statements, and an audit certificate had been produced; the certificate will be signed later in the week by the Auditor General, subject to approval at this meeting.

It was highlighted that the Section 151 Officer had received a letter from the Auditor General, confirming that they had completed their audit; the contents of the letter was read out to the Committee.

Reference was made to the Terms of Reference of the Southwest Wales Corporate Joint Committee, to which it stated that the Governance and Audit Committee were permitted to receive and approve the Annual Return; however, the report was before this Committee due to the fact that the Governance And Audit Committee were not meeting until November 2024. It was explained that Officers thought it imperative to sign off the accounts and close the audit in a timely manner.

RESOLVED:

That the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee Annual Return for year ended 2023/24 be approved.

7. **Forward Work Programme**

The Forward Work Programme was noted.

8. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items received.

CHAIRPERSON