

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

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

19 November 2024

Chairperson: **Councillor S.K.Hunt**

Councillors: W.F.Griffiths, D.Hopkins, T.Hodgeson and
C.Jones

**National Park
Representatives:** R.Heath-Davies

**Officers In
Attendance** C.Morris, R.Griffiths, T.Evans, S.Morris,
G.Jones, B.Smith, H.Lavender, S.Aldred-Jones,
E.Gladstone, K.Tillman and C.Plowman

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 18 September 2023, were approved as an accurate record.

4. **Strategic Planning Development Manual Consultation**

The Committee were provided with an update on the current position of the development of the Strategic Development Plan (SDP).

Members were informed that Officers across the region had engaged with Welsh Government as part of an informal consultation; this was conducted around two years ago and was regarding an informal SDP manual. It was noted that the SDP manual was going to be produced

by Welsh Government and would provide a consistent approach in terms of SDP preparation across Wales.

It was stated that whilst the informal consultation took place some time ago, Officers were still awaiting publication of a formal consultation regarding a draft version of the guidance; there had been numerous delays from Welsh Government in terms of issuing that document for consultation. It was expected that the draft manual will not come forward until Spring 2025, with final publication by late Summer / early Autumn 2025. The Committee were informed that this document was vital in terms of enabling and facilitating SDPs across Wales as it will set out the approach that needed to be taken.

Officers added that the preparation of the SDP was a mirror image of what individual Councils were doing with their Local Development Plans (LDPs), and there was a lot of work involved in preparing these plans.

It was confirmed that numerous discussions had taken place regarding financial, and staff related resources to deliver the work programme; the financial commitment to deliver an SDP was going to be substantial, with estimated figures of between £2.5 and £3.5 million. It was noted that Officers and Politicians had been lobbying Welsh Government in terms of providing sufficient and adequate resources in order for Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) to move forward with this work programme.

A discussion took place in regard to the importance of having adequate staff available to prepare the SDP and deliver the work programme; individual Local Authorities were currently involved in preparing their Replacement Local Development Plans (RLDPs). Therefore, at this point in time, it was not an option to divert Local Authority staff away from that particular work programme in order to progress work relating to the SDP. The Committee were informed that Officers across Local Authorities had received clear instruction from Welsh Government that they were not to stop progress with their RLDPs.

In terms of the current position, it was stated that the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee (SWWCJC) will not be in a position to commence any work on the SDP until the resource issue was resolved.

Officers mentioned that they had received correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary regarding the requirements to produce a delivery agreement by the end of 2024; however, for the reasons mentioned above, this was not going to be achievable at this time. It was explained that a delivery agreement for the SDP will be similar to any Local Development Plan; it will set out the timetable, the scope of any community involvement scheme and the resources required. Officers were not in a position to clarify this detail at this time.

Reference was made to the North Wales and Mid Wales regions, who were in a similar position to the South West region. It was Officers understanding that Cardiff City region had developed an early draft of their delivery agreement; however, there was currently no detail in that document of how they were going to resource that process.

Whilst there hadn't been any substantive work done to date on the SDP, it was highlighted that Officers from Local Authorities across the region were continuing to work collaboratively in terms of evidence-based studies; each Local Authority was bringing forward their RLDP programmes and had been working together in terms of potential joint studies. It was mentioned that these pieces of work will provide the building blocks for the SDP, as and when it could be progressed.

Reference was made to the legal implications detailed in the circulated report, specifically regarding the potential of a judicial review. Officers explained that it was now set out in statute and regulations that regions were required to bring forward an SDP at some point; it was important for the report to identify that there was an element of inherent risk with not being in a position to progress with the SDP work programme.

Members queried how not progressing with the SDP will impact on the wider work of the CJC. It was confirmed that this wouldn't prevent work progressing in other work streams; however, it will be important to ensure that all the relevant documentation and work programmes aligned. It was stated that the SDP will ultimately present a land use planning framework for the region, however it should be aligned with the Regional Transport Plan and any documentation regarding economic development and energy.

A further discussion took place in regard to the SDP manual. It was mentioned that the working draft that Officers had sight of, from the initial consultation, was very substantive and comprehensive in

nature. Officers expressed their views on the way in which this documentation could have been developed.

The Committee was informed that all Local Authorities were in receipt of consultation documents from Welsh Government, which contained a number of proposals. Officers highlighted that one of the proposals related to the timescales associated with RLDPs. It was explained that there was a requirement to review RLDPs every four years, however Welsh Government could be looking to extend that review cycle to six years; this could help Local Authorities and CJsCs in terms of having capacity within the region to progress SDPs. Officers stated that this showed that Welsh Government acknowledged that capacity and resources were an issue.

It was noted that Officers previously had a briefing from Welsh Government and one of the topics of discussion was the role of the CJC and how they could feed into the strategic planning consultation; Welsh Government were expecting to understand what CJsCs think of their role in terms of linking into the planning system as a whole, not just through the SDP.

Reference was made towards the timescales of developing and implementing the SDP. It was noted that the initial SDP manual suggested SDPs could be brought forward within five years; albeit there was recognition that it would likely take longer than this. It was reiterated that the draft delivery agreement that Cardiff City region had produced indicated a six-year timeline. Officers stated that this process involved a lot of work before getting to a position where the region had an adopted SDP in place.

5. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items received.

CHAIRPERSON