

Swansea Bay City Region Joint Scrutiny Committee

(Remotely via Teams)

Members Present:

25 January 2022

Chairperson: Councillor R.James

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Councillors: S.E.Freeguard, P.Downing, J.Curtice, T.Baron,
D.Price and J.Jones

Officers In Attendance J.Burnes, P.Ryder, J.Lewis and A.Thomas

1. **Welcome and Roll Call**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Chairs Announcements**

The Chair noted that he had recently attended a meeting with the Chair of Swansea Bay City Region Joint Committee Cllr Rob Stewart, along with the Programme Manager Jonathan Burnes, Chief Officer Wendy Walters and he was accompanied by officers from Neath Port Talbot Democratic Services to discuss some of the ongoing issues that Scrutiny have faced.

The Chair advised that item 6 (Highlight Report) would not be scrutinised, as Quarter 2 had not been presented to the Committee.

Members expressed their dissatisfaction with the information being provided in a timely manner to allow for effective scrutiny.

It was agreed by the committee that the Chair write formally to all those connected to highlight the issues being faced by the scrutiny committee and suggest ways forward to ensure that the next committee are able to scrutinise as required.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4. **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record.

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd November 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record.

5. **Skills & Talent - update**

The Chair welcomed Jane Lewis to the meeting. Jane Lewis provided members with an update on the Skills & Talent Project.

The purpose of the programme is to ensure that there is a skilled workforce in the region to meet the needs of the new projects being developed and delivered within the City Deal.

The officer highlighted the improvement in the figures of persons with no qualification from 2019 to 2020.

Members were reminded of the Skills and Talent objectives which includes 2,200 additional skills and supporting the development of at least 14,000 skills in individuals (levels 2-77), 3000 new apprenticeship opportunities, working with schools to create a career pathway from school education to higher/further education and apprenticeships in the key areas of digital, construction, energy, smart manufacturing and life science/wellbeing. Also to create two centres of excellence. To achieve this ,pilot projects will be developed to resolve issues where gaps in skills are identified.

To date a programme manager has been appointed who has engaged with the City Deal projects to identify skills needs and gaps. A skills barometer will be completed by mid-February. It is currently with external consultants who are verifying the data and any new trends that are happening in sectors which will impact on the future skills needs of the region.

A Skills Solution Group has been established to identify skills gaps across the region. In addition, a Provide Group has also been established to deliver solutions to the skills gaps identified.

Project ideas are being developed to identify projects to meet the skills needs. There is planned engagement with head teacher forums for 14-19 co-ordinators in each Local Authority Area so see how skills can be developed in these areas to meet the future needs of the projects.

In the next six months another Gateway Review will be undertaken following completion of the Barometer. There will also be wider engagement with schools and colleges regarding the skills needs identified by the Barometer. There will be approval of projects to deliver skills training and upskilling across the 5 key areas identified and further upskilling opportunities will be developed. There is also the planned creation of the apprenticeship opportunities.

Members queried where the funding for the project will be utilised. The results of the Barometer will show the direction that the project needs to go in. The funding needs to be utilised to develop new courses and fit the needs of the projects that are being developed under the City Deal. There is a large amount of interest in the funding to develop sources from schools, colleges, private sector deliverers of training and higher education. There will be a set of criteria to ensure that courses which are provided are not duplicated.

Members expressed their concern about the timing of the project in that many of the projects are already up and running. The Deal is currently in year 5 of 15 and Members were concerned that the skills would not be in place for the completion of the projects.

Members were keen to understand how the upskilling part of the project is being led. The Regional Learning and Skills Partnership has been working with businesses across the whole region the last 10 years. Cluster groups are in place for each of the priority sectors across the region to ensure that they are aware of the plan for the specific sectors and the skills needs.

The Construction Centre of Excellence is currently being discussed between the colleges and universities within the region. It will likely come about without the involvement of the city deal programme. There is a potential for a Centre of Excellence around wind and tidal

energy. This will likely come about at the end of the programme. Members queried when physical manifestation of the centre is likely.

Members sought clarity with regards to funding and the funding allocation at the outset of the project. The total budget is £30million - £10million is from the City Deal and there is £20million match funding which includes £4million from the private sector and £16million from the public sector.

Members queried the effect of the pandemic on the private sector funding. The private sector contribution was the employment of the apprenticeship opportunities created through the contracts and also use of their facilities for training. Officers confirmed that the pandemic has not affected the £4million private funding.

Members queried how the upskilling element of the project will work in terms of the schools. Officers have been attending head teacher forums in Neath Port Talbot to ensure that secondary schools are aware of the City Deal and the Skills & Talent Programme. Also, to discuss how the Skills & Talent Project can work with the new curriculum. Discussions are taking place in terms of how the project can upskill the teachers to ensure that these skills can be delivered into the schools. Further to look at other qualifications within schools that are not examined under WJEC.

The £30million is not capital funding. Members queried if cash grants are available? Officers confirmed grants will be allocated to schools, colleges, higher-education and work-based employers. Not to individuals directly. Members queried if the project works with sole-traders. Officers confirmed that cluster groups would be able to apply for funding to upskills workers and where the training would come from should be outlined in their application.

Members thanked the officer for the update on the project.

6. **Forward Work Programme of the Swansea Bay City Region Joint Committee**

Phil Ryder, went through the Joint Committee Forward Work Programme. He outlined what items had been completed and items that were ongoing.

Members were provided with an update on Governance & Assurance. The Benefits Realisation at Portfolio Level has been completed. The wider benefits realisation is still ongoing and is due to be presented at the forthcoming Joint Committee. With reference to the five recommendations from the Gateway Review, it is noted that three out of the five are complete and the remaining two are partially complete. Software Management is nearly complete, however there is one query with regards to the required assurances and this should be resolved imminently. Programme Project Dashboards have commenced. The portfolio level dashboards are available to view.

The roll of the SRO has gone through Programme Board. All SRO's will receive additional guidance support and where required training from Welsh Government.

The review of the Programme Portfolio Chair happened in November, and in line with the Chair for Joint Committee this would be extended until May 2022.

The Gateway Assurance Framework has been set up and officers are currently working on the memorandum of understanding. This should be presented to Joint Committee in the coming months.

The ministerial approval for the Skills & Talent Project and Campuses Business Case has been received. There is an ongoing update on of the Pentre Awel Business Case update.

The Communications & Marketing Plan has been updated and the Communications and Engagement schedule. The infographics work is ongoing.

The City Deal bi-annual event has been moved to March. The bi-annual event will be a show case event taking place on the 3rd March. All key stakeholders will be invited to attend and engage with businesses and discuss opportunities coming forward. It is hoped that the event will take place in person. It was suggested that an invitation be sent to the Joint Scrutiny Committee so that a member can attend on behalf of the committee.

The declarations of interest are now complete with the exception of ESB. This is due to the form being updated.

Members advised that they had previously raised concerns about the risk register. It is noted in the Forward Work Programme of the Joint

Scrutiny Programme that it is not going before Joint Committee until February. Members asked that the information be brought back before the meeting scheduled for March. Officers would welcome the challenge around the mitigation factors identified on the risk register. Members also outlined the importance of seeing the changes that are being made to the register in response to changing circumstances. Members raised concerns about the perception that every other meeting of the Joint Committee is being cancelled.

Members briefly considered the procurement elements outlined in the Forward Work Programme. Officers noted that procurement activity is based within the local authorities. Members wished to have an overview with regards to where items are being procured from in terms of locality and benefits to the community.

7. **Forward Work Programme**

Members were in agreement that there would be a meeting called for early March which should include Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 Monitoring Reports, a Financial Update and the Portfolio Risk Register.

CHAIRPERSON