

South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

30 July 2024

Chairperson: Councillor R.Stewart

Vice Chairperson: Councillor D.Price

Councillors: J.Harvey and J.Hurley

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

Co-Opted Members: S.Toombs

**Officers In
Attendance:** M.Nicholls, W.Bramble, K.Jones, G.Jones,
T.Jones, C.Griffiths, C.Moore, K.Tillman,
S.Aldred-Jones, P.Relf, S.Davies, R.Moxey,
A.Williams 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 the 23 May 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

4. **Sub-Committee Update - Economic Wellbeing Shared Prosperity
Delivery Update**

Members received an update on the implementation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) in South West Wales, which was a key pillar of delivery for the Regional Economic Delivery Plan.

Officers explained that the delivery mechanism that the South West Wales region had opted for was to use an anchor project approach, in which each Local Authority had its indicative allocation. It was noted that through this approach, there was a link back to core provision in each Local Authority, particularly where there was small business support resource available; building on that core area of working, using Shared Prosperity Funds to augment the support and create budgets for grants to be used by businesses and communities.

It was highlighted that creating the Economic Delivery Plan assisted with progress when the Shared Prosperity Fund was announced; it made it easier to direct the funding into pressures that Officers were aware of across the region.

In regard to the spend figures, Officers confirmed that they were still working to the original profiles, which were currently out of date; whilst the spend figures looked as though they were substantially behind, they were proportionate to the region's current position. It was stated that the delay in the approval of the programme meant that progress was approximately two quarters behind; Officers had been verbalising the need to extend the programme by at least two quarters in order to maximise the outputs and the delivery of the programme.

The Committee was informed that delivery was extensively reported at local level. It was mentioned that there was a number of outcomes that were currently being achieved across the region, particularly regarding business development; there were a large number of businesses that were being directly supported and the affects were being noticed and felt by the businesses.

It was highlighted that the Chair of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee had written to UK Government requesting additional time to ensure finalisation of the projects.

Members expressed that it had been demonstrated regionally how positive this model was and its suitability for running schemes such as this; it had been made clear that they did not want to revert back to the previous model that was used.

It was queried if any feedback had been received in regard to amending the timescales of the programme. It was confirmed that there had been no formal response as of yet, however the interactions with both Welsh and UK Governments had been

progressive; the Chair could not guarantee an extended timescale, however was hopeful that the response would be positive.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

5. **Corporate Plan 2023-2028 - Corporate Priorities for 2024/25**

The Committee received draft version two of the Corporate Plan 2023-2028, which was subject to consultation in January 2024.

It was noted that the document was presented to the South West Wales Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee on 16 July 2024, and there had been no significant amendments received as a result of scrutiny.

Officers referred to the Corporate Priorities for 2024/25 which were detailed as an appendix to the circulated report.

RESOLVED: That the draft version two of the Corporate Plan 2023 – 2028 be approved.

6. **Joint Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (Draft)**

Officers provided an update to the development of the Joint Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (Draft) and Regional Strategic Equality Plan (SEP), which was a requirement of Corporate Joint Committees.

It was stated that the Chief Executive of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee had met with the Commissioner to go through the Strategy; the Strategic Equality Plans of the four Local Authorities had been used to underpin this document.

Members were informed that the version of the Strategy contained within the circulated report was draft, as it required further development; Officers will be keeping in contact with the Commissioner to make sure that they were content with the way in which the Strategy was being developed. It was confirmed that once completed, the Strategy will be brought back to a future meeting for endorsement.

Members welcomed the blending of aspirations of Welsh speakers within the document.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

7. **South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Appointment of the Chief Executive Officer**

Members received a report regarding the appointment of the Chief Executive Officer for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

It was explained that it had previously been agreed that the role of the Chief Executive Officer would rotate between the current Chief Executives of the four Local Authorities within the region. Officers highlighted that William Bramble, of Pembrokeshire County Council, had undertaken the role of Chief Executive Officer for the previous year; it was proposed that Wendy Walters, of Carmarthenshire County Council, be appointed as Chief Executive Officer from 1 November 2024.

The Committee expressed their thanks to Will Bramble for the support and efforts over the last year.

RESOLVED: That Wendy Walters, Chief Executive of Carmarthenshire County Council, be appointed as Chief Executive of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee from the 1st November 2024.

8. **Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring 2024/25**

Officers presented the Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring for year ended 2024/25.

It was highlighted that the budget set for the financial year required a levy on the individual Local Authorities, which was allocated on a population basis; the total combined levy was set at £555,978.

Members were informed that the forecast outturn, as detailed in Appendix A of the circulated report, identified a total surplus of £132,673.

It was noted that there was a predicated underspend regarding the financial services of the Corporate Joint Committee; this wasn't originally anticipated and may change in the future as the various work streams progress and the workload increases.

A discussion took place in regard to the four work streams; it was currently predicated that the workstreams will commit the full expenditure that had been allocated. However, it was noted that this was difficult to accurately judge this early on in the year. Reference

was made to the additional funding from Welsh Government to support the delivery of the Regional Transport Plan; the transport work stream was noted to be delivering a significant amount through the year.

Officers confirmed that projecting a surplus was a positive position to be in as it allows for further development of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee going forward.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

9. **Forecast Outturn and Pre-Audit Annual Return 2023/24**

The Committee received the Forecast Outturn and the Pre-Audit annual return for year ended 2023/24.

It was explained that Corporate Joint Committees were obligated, under legislation, to produce annual accounts; however, due the size of the turnover of the organisation, which was below £2.5million, it meant that there were fewer reporting requirements, and a full statement of accounts was not needed.

Appendix A of the circulated report detailed the Forecast Outturn summary. It was noted that the four workstreams did not draw on as much budget last year as they were still developing at the time; there were also underspends in other areas which were highlighted in the report.

Officers explained that the current financial position of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee meant that as the workstreams develop further, there were reasonable provisions already in place for them to draw on; this will help to avoid a significant increase of the Local Authority levy, whilst still supporting the development of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

A discussion took place in regard to the Annual Return, which was detailed in Appendix B of the circulated report; this was a replication of the figures that were report in Appendix A, however it was detailed in the required Annual Return format. It was highlighted that the Annual Return required auditing and verification; firstly, through internal verification, which had been completed by Pembrokeshire Councils internal audit team. The next stage was for this to be sent onto Audit Wales for an overall verification; once completed they will issue an audit certificate and it will be brought to a future meeting.

Officers mentioned that by internal audit starting the bulk of this work, it reduced the level of work required to be carried out by external audit and also helped financially.

RESOLVED: That the receipt of the Forecast Outturn and the Pre-Audit annual return for year ended 2023/24, be approved.

10. **Private Sector Advisory Board Update - Recruitment of Advisors**

An update was provided to Members on the status to recruit additional advisors to form the Private Sector Advisory Board (PSAB) to the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

The circulated report included the names of the private sector advisors that were appointed, in October 2022, to sit on the PSAB; the aim was to populate the Board up to its full extent of 12 members. It was noted that Officers had sought expressions of interest from constituent Local Authorities and by way of advert; at the time of this meeting, the advert was closed. The Committee was informed that a number of expressions of interest had been received, and Officers were currently going through the longlist to shortlist process; this process was likely to be completed shortly, and the details of the shortlist will be presented at the September 2024 meeting of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee for formal endorsement. It was added that once this had been completed, the PSAB can be utilised to its potential going forward.

It was highlighted that the hopes were to have a full spread of advisors from all of the key sectors to ensure that the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee received a range of advice. The Chief Executive of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee mentioned that this was achievable based on the expression of interest that had been received.

Members were informed that the next step following this process was to identify a representative from the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee for the Western Gateway Partnership.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

11. **Forward Work Programme**

A discussion took place in regard to the transport workstream, specifically the link between the Regional Transport Plan and the bus franchising process. Concerns were raised in regard to the

timeframes of these pieces of work, and the need for Officers to look into when information is presented to Members.

The Forward Work Programme was noted.

12. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items received.

CHAIRPERSON

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