

SOUTH WEST WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

2nd NOVEMBER 2023

Report of the Chief Executive

Report Title: CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE – AUDIT WALES LETTER

Purpose of Report	To note Audit Wales' Commentary on CJs' progress letter with regards to the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee.
Recommendation(s)	It is recommended that Members note the commentary letter and supporting action plan.
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Introduction / Background:

Audit Wales have undertaken a review covering the four Corporate Joint Committees (CJC), which is due to be published in the coming weeks. The report is structured in two parts: the first gives a brief overview of their findings, the second is framed around key risks and opportunities. The purpose of the review was to gain early assurance about the CJs' progress as newly established bodies.

The review also aimed to identify any emerging issues that need to be addressed and provide some early feedback to help CJs as they continue to develop. Each CJC has been provided with a commentary letter, which can be found in Appendix 1. The letter is structured around five key areas:

- Understanding of the Welsh Government's aims for the CJs evolving governance arrangements.
- CJC's plans to deliver the Welsh Government aims and meet their statutory obligations.
- How the CJC relates to existing partnership arrangements.
- CJC's plans to meet their requirements under the Well-Being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act), including setting their well-being objectives

Key areas identified have been included in the below action plan and will be implemented over the next six months.

Action	Timescale
Develop Child Poverty Action Plan	By March 2024

Develop a Participation Strategy	By March 2024
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Further work will be undertaken by Audit Wales over the next 18-24 months to assess progress.

Timescales:

Work on both of these actions will commence shortly with draft versions of both plans being presented to CJC Members as part of the corporate planning process for 2024-25.

Financial Impacts:

The programme of audit work undertaken by Audit Wales has been delivered within the budget allocated for audit and inspection work.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

The CJC is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

In recognition of the above duties, the CJC has adopted an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) Tool which allows for a 2 stage approach to be undertaken to measure any potential impact of its decisions. It is not considered that an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is required for this report as it does not seek a substantive policy decision from Members

The CJC approved its Corporate Plan 2023-2028 in March 2023. The Corporate Plan includes the CJC’s Equality Objective which is set out below for ease of reference:

“To deliver a more equal South West Wales by 2035 by contributing towards:

- (a) *The achievement of the [Welsh Government’s long-term equality aim](#) of eliminating inequality caused by poverty;*

- (b) *The achievement of the [Equality statement set out in Llwybr Newydd](#) which is to make our transport services and infrastructure accessible and inclusive by aiming to remove the physical, attitudinal, environmental, systemic, linguistic and economic barriers that prevent people from using sustainable transport, and*
- (c) *[The achievement of the Welsh Government's long-term equality aims](#) of cohesive communities that are resilient, fair and equal and where everyone is able to participate in political, public and everyday life. There will be no room for racism and / or discrimination of any kind."*

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Alignment with CJC Corporate Plan 2023-2028 and the identified CJC Well-being objectives:

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

The CJC approved its Corporate Plan 2023-2028 in March 2023. The Corporate Plan contains the CJC's well-being objectives and frames the corporate direction of travel. To this end, it is considered that the recommendation(s) contained within this report align(s) to the corporate policy framework of the CJC as set out within its Corporate Plan.

Workforce Impacts:

The preparation of a child poverty strategy and participation strategy will have an impact on officer time but at this stage in the CJC's operation these are not believed to be onerous and should be able to be accommodated within the corporate planning process.

Legal Impacts:

The requirement for a child poverty strategy is referenced within statutory guidance which places a number of public sector statutory duties on CJC's on the basis that they are part of the local government family.

Likewise, the requirement to produce a participation strategy is set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and as CJC's are part of the local government family, the new statutory duties also apply to CJC's.

Risk Management Impacts:

Failure to address the areas for improvement could attract adverse audit opinion impacting the reputation of the CJC and potentially increasing audit fees.

Consultation:

No formal consultation required for the purpose of this report.

Recommendation – For Noting:

To ensure the Committee is aware of the Audit Wales Commentary Letter and for them to take assurance that the recommendations made by Audit Wales will be implemented.

Appendices:

1. Audit Wales Letter

List of Background Papers:

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and related statutory guidance.