

CJC - Governance and Audit Sub-Committee

Meeting Venue
By Zoom Event

Meeting Date
Thursday, 25 April 2024

Meeting Time
1.00 pm

For further information please contact

nicola.williams@powys.gov.uk,
julie.williams2@powys.gov.uk



Issue Date
Thursday, 18th April 2024

Mae croeso i chi siarad yn Gymraeg neu yn Saesneg yn y cyfarfod. Rhowch wybod pa iaith rydych am ei defnyddio erbyn hanner dydd, ddau ddiwrnod gwaith cyn y cyfarfod.

You are welcome to speak Welsh or English in the meeting. Please inform us of which language you wish to use by noon, two working days before the meeting.

AGENDA

1.	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
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2.	APOLOGIES
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To receive apologies of absence

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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To receive any disclosures of personal interest relating to matters to be considered on the agenda

4.	APPOINT A CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR
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To appoint a Chair and Vice Chair

5.	TERMS OF REFERENCE
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To approve the Terms of Reference for the CJC Governance and Audit Sub Committee.

(Pages 3 - 4)

6.	AUDIT WALES REPORTS
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To receive Audit Wales reports:

- CJC Board Report and 22/23 Annual Return
- Letter regarding 23/24 Audit fees and CJC response
- Letter with Commentary on MWCJC progress
- Report on the progress of CJs across Wales

(Pages 5 - 40)

7.	REPORT FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
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To receive a Report from the Chief Executive Officer –

To receive a progress update report on the establishment and operation of the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee and its Sub Committees.

Appendix 1 – Mid Wales CJC Corporate Plan

(Pages 41 - 48)

8.	FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
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To consider a forward work programme.

9.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS
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10.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING
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Governance and Audit Sub-Committee - Terms of Reference

The Membership of the Governance and Audit Sub Committee will be as follows: -

- 1.1 One Lay Member from the Governance and Audit Sub Committee of each of the Constituent Councils.
- 1.2 Two Councillors from the Governance and Audit Sub Committee of each of the Constituent Councils.
- 1.3 Where the Governance and Audit Sub Committee is considering Strategic Development Plan matters the Sub Committee will include a Lay Member from the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority's Audit and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.4 One third of the Governance and Audit Sub Committee must consist of Lay Members and two thirds of the Governance and Audit Sub Committee must consist of Members of the Constituent Authorities. Any act of the Sub Committee will be invalid if these membership requirements are breached.
- 1.5 The Chair and Vice Chair of the Governance and Audit Sub Committee will be appointed by the Sub Committee at the first meeting following the CJC's Annual Meeting and the Chair must be a Lay Member and rotated between Authorities on an annual basis.
- 1.6 The Chair and / or Vice Chair of the Governance and Audit Sub Committee may be removed from office by a motion to remove which is put on the agenda.

Scope:-

- 2.1 To approve CJC's statement of accounts, income and expenditure and balance sheet or record of receipts and payments (as the case may be).
- 2.2 Oversee the production of the annual governance statement, recommend its adoption to the CJC and ensure appropriate action is taken to address the issues raised.
- 2.3 To consider and approve the annual audit opinion on internal control and the level of assurance given to the corporate governance arrangements.
- 2.4 Approve the annual audit plan, ensuring there is sufficient and appropriate coverage, with strong emphasis on risk management and resources are available to implement the plan.
- 2.5 Receive and review internal audit reports and ensure officers respond promptly to the findings. Where necessary recommendations to other committees and portfolio holders will be made, to ensure action plans are implemented.
- 2.6 Consider and approve the annual letter, regulatory plan and specific reports as agreed.

- 2.7 Where necessary ensure action is taken by the officers to address those issues raised and if necessary, recommendations to other committees and portfolio holders will be made to address findings and deliver clear conclusions.
- 2.8 Comment on the scope and depth of the external audit work to ensure it gives value for money.
- 2.9 Assess and approve the annual statement of accounts, external audit opinion and management representation in relation to annual audit findings.
- 2.10 Promote effective relationships between external and internal audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies to ensure the value of audit and inspection is enhanced and actively promoted.
- 2.11 Regularly monitor treasury management reports.
- 2.12 Review and scrutinise the CJC's financial affairs.
- 2.13 Make reports and recommendations in relation to the CJC's financial affairs, review and assess the risk management, internal control, performance assessment and corporate governance arrangements of the CJC.
- 2.14 Make reports and recommendations to the CJC on the adequacy and effectiveness of those arrangements.
- 2.15 Review and assess the CJC's ability to manage complaints effectively, make reports and recommendations in relation to the CJC's ability to manage complaints effectively.
- 2.16 Oversee the CJC's internal and external audit arrangements and review the financial statements prepared by the CJC.
- 2.17 Duty to review the CJC's draft performance self-assessment report and may make recommendations for changes to the conclusions or to anything included in the draft.
- 2.18 Duty to review the CJC's draft response of the panel performance assessment and may make recommendations for changes to the statements made.
- 2.19 Duty to consider the report of the Auditor General following a special inspection.
- 2.20 Duty to review the CJC's draft response to the report of the Auditor General and may make recommendations for changes to the statement made.
3. The Sub Committee can make reports and / or recommendations to the CJC, in connection with the discharge of any function of the CJC.

4. Work Programme

- 4.1 The Chair in consultation with the Sub-Committee will determine its own work programme.

5. Meetings of the Governance and Audit Sub-Committee

- 5.1 The Governance and Audit Sub-Committee must meet at least once annually.

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MID WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 18th January 2024

TITLE:	The Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2023
AUTHOR:	Duncan Hall – Corporate Lead Officer: Finance & Procurement-Ceredigion

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1. To consider and approve the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2023.

2. Decision(s) Sought

2.1. To approve the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2023.

3. Background and Relevant Considerations

3.1. Regulation 10(1) of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 (as amended) requires that the Responsible Financial Officer of The Mid Wales CJC sign and date the statement of accounts, and certify that it presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the body at the end of the year to which it relates and of that body's income and expenditure for that year.

3.2. The financial transactions for the Mid Wales CJC for the year ended 31 March 2023 are summarised in the Annual Return which is included in Appendix 2.

3.3. Audit Wales have audited the Annual Return and their report is included in Appendix 1. Their Audit certificate and opinion states – 'It is our intention to issue an unqualified certificate and report for the year ended 31 March 2023 and there are no matters in respect of the opinion which we wish to draw to your attention.'

4. Recommendations

4.1. The Board approves the Annual Return for the year ending 31 March 2023.

5. Legal Implications

5.1. Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 , Local Government and Housing Act 1989

6. Human Resources Implications

6.1. There are no HR implications arising from this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. Not applicable

8. Appendices

- Appendix 1: Audit Wales – Audit certificate and opinion
- Appendix 2: Mid Wales CJC return for the year ended 31 March 2023

Minor Joint Committees in Wales

Annual Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

Accounting statements 2022-23 for:

Name of body: Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee

	Year ending		Notes and guidance for compilers
	31 March 2022 (£)	31 March 2023 (£)	Please round all figures to nearest £. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or nil balances. All figures must agree to the underlying financial records for the relevant year.
Statement of income and expenditure/receipts and payments			
1. Balances brought forward	0	0	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Must agree to line 7 of the previous year.
2. (+) Income from local taxation/levy	0	160,000	Total amount of income received/receivable in the year from local taxation (precept) or levy/contribution from principal bodies.
3. (+) Total other receipts	0	0	Total income or receipts recorded in the cashbook minus amounts included in line 2. Includes support, discretionary and revenue grants.
4. (-) Staff costs	0	0	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include salaries and wages, PAYE and NI (employees and employers), pension contributions and related expenses eg termination costs.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on external borrowing (if any).
6. (-) Total other payments	0	76,676	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook minus staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	0	83,324	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) – (4+5+6).
Statement of balances			
8. (+) Debtors	0	81,717	Income and expenditure accounts only: Enter the value of debts owed to the body.
9. (+) Total cash and investments	0	78,283	All accounts: The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and investments held at 31 March. This must agree with the reconciled cashbook balance as per the bank reconciliation.
10. (-) Creditors	0	76,676	Income and expenditure accounts only: Enter the value of monies owed by the body (except borrowing) at the year-end.
11. (=) Balances carried forward	0	83,324	Total balances should equal line 7 above: Enter the total of (8+9-10).
12. Total fixed assets and long-term assets	0	0	The asset and investment register value of all fixed assets and any other long-term assets held as at 31 March.
13. Total borrowing	0	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

Annual Governance Statement

We acknowledge as the members of the Committee, our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including the preparation of the accounting statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the accounting statements for the year ended 31 March 2023, that:

	Agreed?		'YES' means that the Council/Board/Committee:	PG Ref
	Yes	No*		
<p>1. We have put in place arrangements for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> effective financial management during the year; and the preparation and approval of the accounting statements. 	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Properly sets its budget and manages its money and prepares and approves its accounting statements as prescribed by law.	6, 12
<p>2. We have maintained an adequate system of internal control, including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption, and reviewed its effectiveness.</p>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.	6, 7
<p>3. We have taken all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and codes of practice that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of the Committee to conduct its business or on its finances.</p>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Has only done things that it has the legal power to do and has conformed to codes of practice and standards in the way it has done so.	6
<p>4. We have provided proper opportunity for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.</p>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Has given all persons interested the opportunity to inspect the body's accounts as set out in the notice of audit.	6, 23
<p>5. We have carried out an assessment of the risks facing the Committee and taken appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.</p>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Considered the financial and other risks it faces in the operation of the body and has dealt with them properly.	6, 9
<p>6. We have maintained an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems throughout the year and have received a report from the internal auditor.</p>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether these meet the needs of the body.	6, 8
<p>7. We have considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on the Committee and, where appropriate, have included them on the accounting statements.</p>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Disclosed everything it should have about its business during the year including events taking place after the year-end if relevant.	6
<p>8. We have taken appropriate action on all matters raised in previous reports from internal and external audit.</p>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Considered and taken appropriate action to address issues/weaknesses brought to its attention by both the internal and external auditors.	6, 8, 23

* Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'no' response given; and describe what action is being taken to address the weaknesses identified.

Additional disclosure notes*

The following information is provided to assist the reader to understand the accounting statements and/or the Annual Governance Statement

1.

2.

3.

* Include here any additional disclosures the Council considers necessary to aid the reader's understanding of the accounting statements and/or the annual governance statement.

Committee approval and certification

The Committee is responsible for the preparation of the accounting statements and the annual governance statement in accordance with the requirements of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the Act) and the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.

<p>Certification by the RFO</p> <p>I certify that the accounting statements contained in this Annual Return present fairly the financial position of the Committee, and its income and expenditure, or properly present receipts and payments, as the case may be, for the year ended 31 March 2023.</p>	<p>Approval by the Council/Board/Committee</p> <p>I confirm that these accounting statements and Annual Governance Statement were approved by the Committee under minute reference:</p>
<p>RFO signature:</p> 	<p>Minute ref:</p> <p>Chair of meeting signature:</p> 
<p>Name: Duncan Hall</p>	<p>Name: James Gibson-Watt</p>
<p>Date: 22/08/23</p>	<p>Date: 22/08/23</p>

Auditor General for Wales' Audit Certificate and report

I report in respect of my audit of the accounts under section 13 of the Act, whether any matters that come to my attention give cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. My audit has been conducted in accordance with, guidance issued by the Auditor General for Wales.

I certify that I have completed the audit of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2023 of:

Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee
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Auditor General's report

Audit opinion - Unqualified

On the basis of my review, in my opinion no matters have come to my attention giving cause for concern that in any material respect, the information reported in this Annual Return:

- has not been prepared in accordance with proper practices;
- that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met;
- is not consistent with the Committee's governance arrangements; and
- that the Committee does not have proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Other matters arising and recommendations

There are no further matters or recommendations that I wish to draw to the Committee's attention.

External auditor's name:	
External auditor's signature:	Date:
For and on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales	

Annual internal audit report to:

Name of body: Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee

The Committee's internal audit, acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, has included carrying out a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls expected to be in operation during the financial year ending 31 March 2023.

The internal audit has been carried out in accordance with the Committee's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the following control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Committee.

	Agreed?				Outline of work undertaken as part of the internal audit (NB not required if detailed internal audit report presented to body)
	Yes	No*	N/A	Not covered**	
1. Appropriate books of account have been properly kept throughout the year.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Financial accounts have been analysed and no concerns were raised.
2. Financial regulations have been met, payments were supported by invoices, expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	A review of a sample of invoices and records, all payments were found to be accurate.
3. The body assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Significant risks to achieving its objectives were reported and discussed within the Corporate Joint committee however no official risk register was created.
4. The annual precept/levy/resource demand requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process, progress against the budget was regularly monitored, and reserves were appropriate.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The budgets and items of expenditure incurred were reported to the Corporate Joint Committee.
5. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	No additional income was received
6. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts; expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	No petty cash is held
7. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with minuted approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	No one is directly employed by the CJC.
8. Asset and investment registers were complete, accurate, and properly maintained.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	No assets are held

	Agreed?				Outline of work undertaken as part of the internal audit (NB not required if detailed internal audit report presented to body)
	Yes	No*	N/A	Not covered**	
9. Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The financial transactions are maintained in the account of the CJC. Bank reconciliations are undertaken.
10. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments/income and expenditure), agreed with the cashbook, were supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records, and where appropriate, debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The CJC possess adequate control arrangements for accounting. Financial statements are supported by an audit trail. Debtor and Creditor payments were recorded correctly.

For any risk areas identified by the Council/Board/Committee (list any other risk areas below or on separate sheets if needed) adequate controls existed:

	Agreed?				Outline of work undertaken as part of the internal audit (NB not required if detailed internal audit report presented to body)
	Yes	No*	N/A	Not covered**	
11. Insert risk area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Insert text
12. Insert risk area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Insert text
13. Insert risk area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Insert text


* If the response is 'no', please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

** If the response is 'not covered', please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned, or if coverage is not required, internal audit must explain why not.

[My detailed findings and recommendations which I draw to the attention of the Committee are included in my detailed report to the Committee dated _____.] * Delete if no report prepared.

Internal audit confirmation

I/we confirm that as the Committee's internal auditor, I/we have not been involved in a management or administrative role within the body (including preparation of the accounts) or as a member of the body during the financial years 2021-22 and 2022-23. I also confirm that there are no conflicts of interest surrounding my appointment.

Name of person who carried out the internal audit: Kate Ryde, Kevin Price (SWAP)
Signature of person who carried out the internal audit: 
Date: 22/08/2023

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Reference: 3711A2023

Date issued: August 2023

Dear Colleagues

Approach to auditing the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee 2023

Further to my letter of 18 May where I set out my approach to my audit of the Corporate Joint Committee's (CJC) accounts, in this letter I set out my approach to the performance audit aspects of my work.

My audit requirements

As the CJs are considered to be local government bodies under Part 2 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act), I am required to:

- give an opinion on the annual accounts (or Annual Return) of the CJC;
- satisfy myself that the CJC has proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources;
- provide opportunity for electors to ask questions or make objections at audit; and
- consider whether there are any matters that come to my attention that should be brought to the attention of the public and/or whether I should make written recommendations under section 25 of the 2004 Act.

As the CJs are also named bodies under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, I am also required to:

- assess the extent to which the CJs have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when: setting well-being objectives; and
- taking steps to meet them; and

- carry out such an examination of each public body at least once in a reporting period and report on the results of those examinations to the Senedd.

Performance audit approach

I recently issued a letter to the CJC reflecting its progress to date. My auditors will continue to keep track of the CJC's progress over the course of the year. It would be helpful if you could keep them sighted of any key documents and they will arrange to meet with you during the year to discuss the CJC's progress.

Fee, audit team and timetable

The estimated fee for the performance audit aspect of my work is set out in **Exhibit 1**. I have also included the estimated fee for the audit of accounts work so you can see the total fee.

Exhibit 1: audit fee – this table sets out the proposed audit fee for 2023, by area of audit work

<u>Audit area</u>	<u>Proposed fee (£)¹</u>
Audit of accounts	1,764
Performance audit work	2,093
Total fee	3,857

If new risks emerge, changes to my programme of audit work and therefore my fee may be required. I shall make no changes without first discussing them with the CJC.

The main members of my team, together with their contact details, are summarised in **Exhibit 2**.

¹ Notes: The fees shown in this document are exclusive of VAT, which is not charged to you.

Exhibit 2: my audit team

Name	Role	Contact number	E-mail address
Derwyn Owen	Engagement Director	07909 0882609	derwyn.owen@audit.wales
Jason Blewitt	Audit Manager (Financial Audit)	029 20320500	jason.blewitt@audit.wales
Non Jenkins	Audit Manager (Performance Audit)	029 20320500	non.jenkins@audit.wales

I can confirm that my team members are all independent of the CJC and your officers.

Timetable

As I set out in my letter in May, it is our intention to complete the audit of the Annual Return by the end of November 2023.

Auditor General for Wales – General Audit Fair Processing Notice

Our general audit fair processing notice can be found on our [website](#). The notice tells you about how the Auditor General for Wales and staff of the Wales Audit Office process personal information collected in connection with our work.

Yours sincerely



Derwyn Owen

Director – Financial Audit

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Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

Duncan Hall
Swyddog Arweiniol Corfforaethol : Cyllid a Chaffael
Corporate Lead Officer : Finance and Procurement

Canolfan Rheidol, Rhodfa Padarn,
Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth. SY23 3UE
www.ceredigion.gov.uk

Derwyn Owen
1 Cwr y Ddinas / 1 Capital Quarter
Caerdydd / Cardiff
CF10 4BZ

Via email only: Derwyn.Owen@audit.wales

Dyddiad Date	25/09/2023
Gofynnwch am Please ask for	Duncan Hall
Llinell uniongyrchol Direct line	01545 570881
Fy nghyf My ref	
Eich cyf Your ref	3711A2023
Ebost Email	clic@ceredigion.gov.uk

Dear Mr Owen

I am writing in my capacity as Section 151 officer for the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee (MWCJC).

Given the MWCJC has already approved its budget for 23/24 including the Levy contributions from each Constituent Body, it's disappointing to see that we are now being notified almost halfway through the financial year that there is additional cost burden of £2,093 for Performance audit related work taking estimated audit fees up to just under £4,000. The MWCJC was well aware that there would be a cost for the audit of the accounts and had made budget provision for this, however to my knowledge it had not previously been notified of a direct Performance audit cost.

Whilst ultimately the cost is not significant in terms of Ceredigion County Council or Powys County Council, in the context of the 23/24 Mid Wales CJC budget of £175,000 it is more significant. Moving forwards, please could I therefore request that we have more advance notification of proposed audit fees so that these can be factored into the MWCJC's budget setting process.

Yours sincerely

Duncan Hall
Corporate Lead Officer: Finance and Procurement

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Cewch ateb Cymraeg i bob gohebiaeth Gymraeg ac ateb Saesneg i bob gohebiaeth Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English. Correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and correspondence in English will be answered in English. Corresponding in Welsh will not involve any delay.

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Corporate Joint Committees – commentary on their progress

Audit year: 2022-23

Date issued: October 2023

Document reference:3832A2023

EMBARGOED

This document has been prepared as part of work performed in accordance with statutory functions.

In the event of receiving a request for information to which this document may be relevant, attention is drawn to the Code of Practice issued under section 45 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The section 45 code sets out the practice in the handling of requests that is expected of public authorities, including consultation with relevant third parties. In relation to this document, the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office are relevant third parties. Any enquiries regarding disclosure or re-use of this document should be sent to Audit Wales at infoofficer@audit.wales.

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.

EMBARGOED

Contents

Report summary	4
Detailed report	
Background	7
Why we did this review	7
What we looked at	8
Methodology	8
Findings	9
Recommendations	14

Report summary

Summary

Overall finding

- 1 Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) are still in their infancy. I was initially concerned about their slow and varied progress, and Welsh Government's preparedness to facilitate their implementation, but there have been more positive signs of the CJCs moving forward recently.

What this report covers

- 2 I have issued letters to each of the four CJCs, which set out my views on their progress. In this report, I set out a high-level summary of my cumulative findings and my expectations of the CJCs over the next 12 to 18 months.
- 3 As the findings in this report are more general, some may be more pertinent to some CJCs than others. Hence, this report should be read in conjunction with the individual letters I issued to the four CJCs. These are available on my website [here](#).

Background

- 4 Welsh Government established four CJCs to help strengthen regional collaboration between authorities:
 - South East Wales CJC
 - South West Wales CJC
 - North Wales CJC
 - Mid Wales CJC
- 5 They came into effect in April 2021 and were given the following functions from June 2022:
 - developing transport policies
 - preparing a strategic development plan
 - economic wellbeing – anything a CJC considers is likely to promote or improve the economic wellbeing of its area
- 6 Membership of the CJCs consists of the leaders of the councils within the specific region and the National Park Authorities (NPAs) that sit within that region.

The focus of my audit

- 7 As the CJCs are new corporate bodies, I looked at their progress in developing their arrangements to meet their statutory obligations and the Welsh Government's aim of strengthening regional collaboration. My team did initial work in autumn

2022 and then did some further work between April and June 2023 to update my findings.

Summary of my findings

- 8 From my initial work in autumn 2022, I was concerned that the CJsCs were making variable progress to establish themselves and I felt unable to determine with confidence if they would deliver as intended. I was concerned that they would just do the bare minimum and exist in name only. I appreciated the CJsCs were being implemented at a time when constituent bodies were facing considerable financial and demand pressures, and that they continue to do so.
- 9 Over two years on since their establishment in April 2021 and 12 months since they were given their core functions and duties in June 2022, it is clear that the CJsCs are still in their infancy. Progress of the CJsCs differ in different areas, but overall, governance arrangements are not yet all in operation and there is much work to be done to meet their strategic planning responsibilities.
- 10 Although they are building on city/growth deal arrangements, they haven't all determined how they are going to work with other partnerships and bodies to make the most of resources and expertise. This is crucial given the main rationale for the CJsCs' establishment was to strengthen regional collaboration.
- 11 As I set out in this report and my individual letters, I would have expected more progress in some areas.
- 12 My work identified some positive findings about the CJsCs' progress. All four CJsCs had put in place the building blocks for their development and to meet Welsh Government's objectives. I found examples of CJsCs exploring how they could make the most of the opportunities the new arrangements provide. For instance, as a more efficient forum for regional decision-making and to work collaboratively to tackle some significant challenges. CJsCs were also making the most of the flexibility to tailor their arrangements to fit with their regional priorities.
- 13 Equally, I found several issues, particularly during my initial work in autumn 2022, which posed risks to the CJsCs' development. For example, commitment to the CJsCs was mixed, and clarity and progress of plans at that time to deliver their functions was variable.
- 14 There was also a strong view amongst the CJsCs that the Welsh Government could have been better prepared on a range of issues to ease the implementation of the CJsCs. This included:
 - establishing the VAT status and financial status of the CJsCs;
 - understanding the implications for the City/Growth Deals; and
 - clearer expectations of the practical delivery of the CJsCs' functions and public duties.
- 15 Delays in resolving these issues did affect the implementation of the CJsCs.

- 16 However, since the financial status issues have now been resolved, I can see that the CJs are moving forward, and I am more optimistic about their progress. Appetite for the CJs is more positive and the CJs have, or are developing their, plans and ambitions.
- 17 Unlike other joint arrangements, the CJs are legal entities in their own right. They need to maximise the benefits this affords them if they are genuinely committed to delivering positive benefits for their regions.
- 18 I would expect to see the CJs further advanced over the next 12 to 18 months. My audit teams will continue to monitor the CJs' progress. I would be concerned if my teams find that the CJs have made little progress and that they have not addressed the points I raise in this report.

Recommendations

- 19 I have made five recommendations to the CJs as set out page 14 relating to:
- governance arrangements
 - delivering their strategic planning functions,
 - meeting their public sector duties,
 - partnership working and involving the National Park Authorities
 - meeting their duties under the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
- 20 These recommendations set out where I would expect to see the CJs' making further progress over the next 12-18 months in line with those areas raised in this report. Some of these will be more relevant to some CJs than others so the CJs will also need to reflect on the points raised in my individual letters. However, the main thrust of this report is that I would expect to see the CJs further advanced more generally when I do my next assessment of the CJs' progress.

Detailed report

Background – what is a Corporate Joint Committee

- 21 Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) are new corporate bodies which have some similar powers and duties to councils. They can directly own assets and employ staff. They must appoint a Chief Executive, Finance Officer, and Monitoring Officer. CJCs' membership is made up of the leaders of the councils within the specific region and the National Park Authorities that sit within that region.
- 22 Four CJCs were established by regulations under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to help regional collaboration between authorities:
- South East Wales CJC
 - South West Wales CJC
 - North Wales CJC
 - Mid Wales CJC
- 23 The CJCs came into effect in April 2021 and were given the following functions from June 2022:
- Developing transport policies
 - Preparing a strategic development plan
 - Economic wellbeing – anything a CJC considers is likely to promote or improve the economic wellbeing of its area.
- 24 CJCs are required to comply with a range of regulations and duties including:
- Well-being of Future Generations Act well-being duty
 - Welsh language
 - Public Sector Equality
 - Biodiversity
 - Child poverty

Why I did this review

- 25 In my programme consultation paper in March 2022, I set out that I would keep track of governance arrangements around the creation of new bodies. This included the new CJCs where the Auditor General for Wales has a statutory role. As the CJCs are new entities set up as a result of new legislation¹, I wanted to gain early assurance about their progress. I also wanted to identify any emerging issues that need to be addressed and provide some early feedback to help CJCs as they continue to develop.

¹ Four Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) were established by regulations under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

- 26 I did this audit in accordance with Section 41 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004. This Act places a duty on the Auditor General for Wales to undertake studies designed to enable me to make recommendations for improving economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the discharge of the functions or services of local government bodies in Wales.
- 27 I also did the audit to help fulfil my duties under section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) 2015 Act (WFG Act).

What I looked at – the scope of this audit

- 28 My work sought to answer the question: Are Corporate Joint Committees making good progress in developing their arrangements to meet their statutory obligations and the Welsh Government's aim of strengthening regional collaboration? To do this, my team explored the following areas:
- understanding of the Welsh Government's aims for the CJsCs;
 - CJsCs' evolving governance arrangements;
 - CJsCs' plans to deliver the Welsh Government aims and meet their statutory obligations;
 - how the CJsCs relate to existing partnership arrangements; and
 - CJsCs' plans to meet their requirements under the WFG Act, including setting their well-being objectives.
- 29 I did not do this review to determine the validity of, or requirement for, CJsCs.
- 30 My team did the initial work during October 2022 to February 2023 and did some further work to update their findings between April to June 2023.

Methodology

- 31 My findings are based on document reviews, meeting observations and interviews with the Leaders, Chief Executives and Section 151 officers of each of the four CJsCs. My team also interviewed Welsh Government officers and asked the views of the constituent members of the CJsCs as part of our routine liaison meetings. My team also met with representatives from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).

What I found: CJs are still in their infancy. I was initially concerned about their slow and varied progress, and Welsh Government's preparedness to facilitate their implementation, but there have been more positive signs of the CJs moving forward recently

Understanding of Welsh Government's aims for the CJs

- 32 The CJs generally understood and acknowledged the potential benefits of the Welsh Government's aims for the CJs. These benefits included the opportunity to leverage additional investments, work collaboratively to reduce carbon emissions and to increase capacity and resilience by pooling resources to tackle recruitment challenges.
- 33 But at the time of my initial work in autumn 2022, the level of acceptance, optimism, and engagement for CJs amongst CJs and the constituent bodies varied considerably. I saw some examples of CJs embracing opportunities and developing arrangements, but also scepticism from some about the need for CJs at all. Given the significant financial and demand pressures being faced by the constituent bodies, the CJs were not seen as a priority.
- 34 Welsh Government provided an implementation grant of £250,000 to each region to support their initial planning. However, there was a clear sense of frustration amongst the CJs about the preparedness of Welsh Government on a range of issues which would have facilitated the CJs' progress. These included:
- clarity on the financial status of CJs, pertinent, for example, for borrowing and pension purposes;
 - establishing VAT status to avoid incurring 20% VAT;
 - understanding the implications for the City/Growth Deals which sit with the UK government; and
 - clearer expectations and understanding of the practical delivery of their functions and meeting their public duties.
- 35 The CJs were frustrated that these matters had not been considered by Welsh Government at the outset and in the pace of progress to resolve them.
- 36 The phased approach to legislation and guidance was quite messy and disjointed and spanned a number of Welsh Government departments. CJs were working through, and responding to, guidance and requirements as and when they came out. CJs identified some practical challenges to meeting their requirements, which they proactively raised with Welsh Government. Welsh Government officials have acknowledged that they have some clear lessons to learn from this experience.

- 37 These issues impacted the pace at which the CJs progressed, but also served to dampen levels of appetite for the CJs, which I also found were affecting some of the CJs' progress.
- 38 Earlier in 2023, I was concerned that there was a risk that CJs would not develop effectively and simply exist in name only, raising questions about their ability to deliver their statutory functions, meet Welsh Government objectives and provide value for money.
- 39 More recently and since the financial status issues have been resolved, there seems to be a more positive attitude about the CJs. When I updated my work in the early summer, I found that the CJs were beginning to show signs of progress. Consequently, I'm more optimistic about their chances of delivering as they were intended than I was in the autumn last year. It will be important that they now continue to maintain this momentum.

Governance arrangements

- 40 CJs have established their core governance arrangements, but at the time of my updated work in early summer 2023, not all the arrangements were up and running across all the CJs. To a certain extent, this reflected the limited activities of the CJs to date.
- 41 The progress of the individual CJs in establishing their governance arrangements are reflected in the letters I have issued to each of them.
- 42 Overall, I found CJs' progress in developing and operationalising some of their governance arrangements to be mixed. They had all put in place arrangements for statutory officers, some on an interim basis. The CJs had also maximised the flexibility to tailor their arrangements and to use some constituent bodies' existing arrangements. In the rest of this section, I highlight some particular areas where I would expect to see further progress over the next 12 months.
- 43 CJs are required to have Governance and Audit Committees (GACs), but what I found in the early summer 2023, was that not all CJC GACs had been appointed to and were meeting. South West Wales GAC had met twice.
- 44 Similarly, apart from South West Wales CJC, scrutiny arrangements had not all been agreed and implemented. The CJs don't have to have a specific scrutiny committee themselves, but they have to co-operate, and provide assistance to, the scrutiny undertaken by constituent bodies or via a joint scrutiny committee.
- 45 The CJs are local government bodies using public money. It is important that CJs and the constituent bodies determine how the CJs will be held to account. GAC and scrutiny arrangements should be providing oversight and scrutiny of the CJs' activities and arrangements. Without this, there is a risk that the CJs may operate in a vacuum with limited scrutiny and public transparency.
- 46 The statutory guidance on the CJC sets out the expectation that the CJC will set up specific sub-committees for its key functions. Three of the four CJs had set up functional sub-committees in line with the guidance. However, at the time of my

updated work in the early summer, only the Strategic Development Planning sub-committee for Mid Wales CJC had actually met. So, most of these sub-committees were not yet in operation and simply established on paper.

- 47 I recognise that the activities of the CJsCs have been limited to date. However, I would expect to see greater progress with the CJsCs' governance arrangements being put into practice to provide the necessary checks and balances in line with good governance standards over the next six to 12 months.

Clarity and progress of the CJsCs' plans to deliver Welsh Government's aims and meet their statutory obligations

- 48 CJsCs were at different stages of their planning. Some had clear ambitions to maximise particular opportunities for their regions. Others were beginning to clarify their plans. Taking account of the need to resolve the financial status issues, the CJsCs had all taken a considered and pragmatic approach to their planning.
- 49 CJsCs were confident in their abilities to meet their economic well-being duty building on the existing work and progress of the city and growth deals. When I updated my findings in the early summer, not all CJsCs intended to transfer their city/growth deals to the CJsCs. South East Wales CJC had had a clear ambition from the start to lift and shift the Cardiff Capital Region city deal programme into the CJC and had developed a transition plan to support this.
- 50 CJsCs and city/growth deals are regional arrangements, which have similar and mutually beneficial objectives, but different funding and legal bases. So, whatever the CJsCs decide, they and the city/growth deal bodies will need to determine how they can optimise resources to manage these arrangements efficiently and effectively for the benefit of their regions. Given my role is to examine how public bodies manage and spend public money, including how they achieve value in the delivery of public services, I will be keen to see how these two regional arrangements operate.
- 51 I found that the CJsCs' progress with delivering their strategic development planning (SDP) and regional transport planning (RTP) functions was more limited. The budgets allocated by the CJsCs to support the delivery of these two functions varied considerably between the CJsCs.
- 52 Mid Wales CJC had determined its options for delivering its strategic development planning function, including staff resources to support this. North Wales CJC had agreed staffing structures to support both planning functions. But at the time of my updated work in May and June, progress in these areas was less developed with the other two CJsCs.
- 53 I appreciate that there were some delays in resolving the financial status issues and that Welsh Government had not finalised the RTP guidance. However, as I emphasise in my letters to each of the CJsCs, Welsh Government had engaged with the CJsCs about the strategic development and transport planning functions so

the CJsCs should have had some understanding of expectations. For example, Welsh Government officers shared advisory notices recommending early preparation for the strategic development plans in August 2021. There was also an event to discuss CJsCs' planning functions in January 2022. The strategic development planning process, in particular, is complex and lengthy and the CJsCs need to get this underway.

- 54 Therefore, despite the financial status issues, I would have liked to have seen more progress with the CJsCs strategic development and regional transport planning functions. I would expect to see the CJsCs making further progress with these functions over the next 12 months.
- 55 I found that the CJsCs' had made some progress to meet their public sector duties, but this varied across the CJsCs and reflected their limited operation to date. Generally, CJsCs had agreed arrangements to meet their Welsh Language and equality duties often adopting arrangements used by one of the constituent bodies. With the exception of South East Wales CJC, the CJsCs had not published their child poverty action plans. Welsh Government's draft child poverty strategy is currently out for consultation so the CJsCs will need to ensure their plans build on and align with this. Given the CJsCs' potential reach and underlying aims, the CJsCs will need to ensure these duties are actively considered in their activities and not just done in a tokenistic way to tick a box.

Partnership working

- 56 I have commented frequently on the complex partnership landscape in Wales so was keen to see how CJsCs were exploring how they relate to and work with existing partnerships. To make the most of existing resources and to tackle challenges more collaboratively.
- 57 I found that most CJsCs were building on their city deal/growth deal arrangements in some shape or form, but aside from South West Wales CJC, the CJsCs hadn't formally determined how they can work with other bodies and partnerships, including making the most of the involvement of the National Park Authorities (NPAs). Thus, potentially missing the opportunity to coordinate activities and resources for the benefit of the region.
- 58 South West Wales CJC had looked beyond its statutory membership to help it maximise the contributions of key stakeholders in the region. It was positive to see that it had co-opted other bodies, such as universities and local health boards. It had also taken the opportunity to involve the National Park Authorities (NPAs) more fully in its arrangements, beyond the NPAs' statutory role around strategic development planning.
- 59 However, this wasn't the case with the other CJsCs, who had largely not explored how they could involve the NPAs beyond their strategic planning role. The NPAs also have requirements around economic development. Given this and their geography and reach, there is a real opportunity for the CJsCs to maximise the

positive contribution that NPAs could have on the delivery of the CJsCs' well-being objectives and functions, beyond their strategic development planning role.

- 60 It will be key for the CJsCs to explore how they can engage and work with other bodies to make the most of resources and expertise. CJsCs have been set up to strengthen regional collaboration and they need to demonstrate that they can do this. I would expect to see more progress on this across all the CJsCs when I do my next piece of work on CJsCs.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (WFG Act)

- 61 Like the other named bodies under the WFG Act², the CJsCs must set and publish well-being objectives. They must act in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting those objectives and when taking steps to meet them. CJsCs were required to set their first well-being objectives by April 2023.
- 62 It was concerning that during my initial work in autumn 2022, some interviewees seemed quite unaware of the CJsCs' duties around the Act. But I appreciate that, at that time, the activities of the CJsCs had been very limited and that setting of well-being objectives had not been seen as a priority.
- 63 When I updated my work in May and June, I found that two of the four CJsCs (South West Wales and South East Wales) had published their well-being objectives, although only South West Wales had consulted on theirs. Mid Wales CJC had drafted theirs. North Wales CJC indicated that its well-being objectives would be influenced by the transfer of Ambition North Wales into the CJC and once it had received the final guidance on strategic development and regional transport planning from Welsh Government and appointed planning officers.
- 64 There was a general consensus amongst the CJsCs of wanting to take a proportionate approach to the Act commensurate with their role and activities. It was positive that they had been discussing their approaches with the Future Generations Commissioner's office. Nevertheless, I would expect North Wales and Mid Wales CJsCs to be progressing with setting and publishing their well-being objectives in line with legislative requirements.
- 65 More broadly, the CJsCs have a duty to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle. That framework has the potential to add value to how they plan and deliver their work. As new entities, CJsCs have the opportunity to ensure that the sustainable development principle underpins what they do and how they do it from the outset.

² The Well-being of Future Generations Act provides for a shared purpose through seven well-being goals for Wales. These well-being goals are indivisible from each other and explain what is meant by the wellbeing of Wales. Further information about these goals is available in the [Well-Being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 Essentials Guide](#)

- 66 As the CJs take forward their plans and start to make decisions about their regions, I would expect CJs to be able to demonstrate that they are putting the sustainable development at the heart of their activities. It would be a significant missed opportunity if they do not do this. It would also raise questions about the extent to which they have proper value for money arrangements given the five ways of working are integral to these arrangements. I will be undertaking examinations of the extent to which they have applied the sustainable development principle in future years, as required by the Act. So, I will be keen to see how the CJs have embraced this opportunity.
- 67 My team has developed some positive indicators which provide an illustrative set of characteristics of what good looks like when organisations act in accordance with the sustainable development principle. The constituent bodies will be familiar with these, and it will be useful for the CJs to draw on these as they deliver their well-being objectives.

Recommendations

- 68 My recommendations below set out where I would expect to see the CJs' making further progress over the next 12-18 months in line with those areas raised in this report. Some of these will be more relevant to some CJs than others so the CJs will also need to reflect on the points raised in my individual letters. However, the main thrust of this report is that I would expect to see the CJs further advanced more generally when I do my next piece of work on the CJs.

Recommendations

Governance arrangements

- R1 The four CJs should ensure that their governance arrangements are up and running and are effectively providing the necessary checks and balances to support robust and transparent decision-making and effective scrutiny.

Strategic development planning and regional transport planning

- R2 The four CJs should ensure that they take action to further progress with these functions over the next 12 months in order to facilitate an integrated, efficient and consistent approach to strategic planning in line with Welsh Government's aims.

Public sector duties

Recommendations

- R3 The CJs need to ensure that they meet their public sector duties where they haven't already done so. For example, to publish child poverty action plans and bio-diversity reports. But more significantly, the CJs need to ensure they actively take account of these duties in their decision-making and activities.
-

Partnership working and National Park Authorities

- R4 Whilst South West Wales CJC has co-opted different organisations and the NPAs into its arrangements, the other CJs need to determine more fully how they can engage and work with other bodies to make the most of resources and expertise. This includes exploring how they can maximise the involvement of the NPAs beyond their statutory strategic development planning role.
-

Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015

- R5 North Wales and Mid Wales CJs should ensure that they progress with developing their well-being objectives in line with requirements. More broadly, the four CJs should ensure they effectively apply the sustainable development principle, so they are well placed to improve the well-being of the populations they serve and can demonstrate that they have proper value for money arrangements.



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Mid Wales Corporate
Joint Committee

Reference: AC381

Date issued: 21 August 2023

Via email

Dear Colleagues

Commentary on CJsCs' progress – Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee

Further to my recent summary report on the Corporate Joint Committees' (CJC) progress in developing their arrangements, this letter sets out the findings pertinent to the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee. It is structured around the following areas as per the summary report:

- understanding of the Welsh Government's aims for the CJsCs.
- 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 WFG Act, including setting their well-being objectives.

My team will be happy to attend a meeting of the CJC to talk through the findings.

Understanding of Welsh Government's aims for the CJsCs

- Mid Wales CJC generally understands the Welsh Government's aims for the CJsCs.
- However, when I did my initial work in autumn 2022, there were mixed views about the value of the CJC and its role to drive regional working. The CJC was accepting, rather than embracing, of these aims.
- Nevertheless, the CJC recognises that it is a legal requirement with specific functions and powers, and it is beginning to work towards its implementation.

- I understand it has recently had a workshop to discuss its future operations and I will be keen to see how the CJC progresses following this workshop.
- As I mention in my summary report, I recognise that there was a strong sense of frustration about the preparedness of Welsh Government to support the implementation of the CJsCs. This included the phased approach to legislation and guidance, but notably the financial status issues around VAT and borrowing, and the pace at which these issues were resolved. I appreciate that these issues have affected the pace at which the CJC has progressed.

Governance arrangements

- **The CJC has established and constituted its core governance arrangements, but aside from the Strategic Development Planning sub-committee, other sub-committees are not yet up and running and the CJC has not met since January 2023.**
- The CJC agreed its standing orders in January 2022 and its constitution in July 2022. This included its scheme of delegation, procedure rules and code of conduct.
- The CJC has met twice since July 2022, but has not met since it agreed its 2023-24 budget in January 2023 underlining the limited activity to date. The CJC cancelled its meeting in May 2023 pending a meeting with Welsh Government Ministers. It is due to meet at the end of July 2023.
- The CJC has appointed to its statutory posts making the most of the flexibility to use existing arrangements from the two councils. It has agreed that the Chief Executive post will be rotated annually between the Chief Executives of the two councils. The post has recently rotated on an interim basis to the Chief Executive of Ceredigion County Council.
- The Section 151 and Monitoring Officer roles are held by the relevant officers from Ceredigion County Council and Powys County Council respectively.
- As well as the statutory officers, the CJC has appointed joint Senior Responsible Officers. One from Powys County Council and one from Ceredigion County Council. The CJC has also appointed a Strategic Programme Manager, and Programme Support officer to support the work of the CJC. These posts are seconded from Powys County Council. The Strategic Programme Manager post also covers wider regional work (the Mid Wales Growth deal, Regional Skills Partnership) for 50% of their time.
- The statutory guidance on the CJC sets out the expectation that the CJC will set up specific sub-committees for its key functions. The CJC has done this. It has agreed the terms of reference and membership of its Strategic Development Planning and Regional Transport Planning sub-committees. The CJC has indicated its intention to appoint the Growing Mid Wales Board as its Regional Economic Well-being Development sub-committee.
- The CJC has also agreed the terms of reference and membership of its other sub-committees. This includes its Standards Sub-Committee, Overview and

Scrutiny Sub-Committee, and its Governance and Audit Sub-Committee (GAC). It has appointed lay members to its GAC as required. Two representatives from the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority will also be appointed to the GAC.

- As its activities have been limited to date, some of its governance arrangements are not yet active. I recognise that the CJC had not wanted to progress its arrangements until the financial status issues had been resolved. As of June 2023, only one of the sub-committees, the Strategic Development sub-committee, has met. The Mid Wales Growth Board has been meeting, but it has not updated its terms of reference to reflect that it is also now a sub-committee of the CJC.
- The CJC is required to co-operate with, and provide assistance to, the scrutiny undertaken by constituent bodies or via a joint scrutiny committee. The CJC has agreed the terms of reference and membership for an Overview and Scrutiny sub-committee with representatives from both councils. This sub-committee hasn't met yet. It will be important for the CJC to be held to account for its activities. The CJC may find it helpful to look at my [discussion paper on scrutiny](#) as it develops its scrutiny arrangements.
- The Mid Wales Growth Board (MWGB) has not formally decided if it will transfer to the CJC. However, I understand that following the recent meeting with Ministers, this is the likely direction of travel. This would seem sensible given the two arrangements largely involve the same bodies and are working to the same objectives.
- If the MWGB and CJC decide to transfer the Mid Wales Growth Deal to the CJC, this would mean that the CJC would have a much larger budget and increased responsibility. The role of the GAC and other governance arrangements will have greater significance. I would, therefore, expect that it constitutes its Governance and Audit Committee at the earliest opportunity so that there is the necessary scrutiny and oversight of its finances and arrangements.
- I would expect that the CJC now advances the implementation of its governance arrangements. I will be monitoring their progress over the next 12 months. I would expect to see that they are operating in practice to help provide the necessary checks and balances in line with the principles of good governance.

Progress and clarity of plans

- **The CJC is beginning to develop its broader vision and priorities and has made some progress determining its options for its strategic development and transport planning functions.**
- The CJC has drafted a corporate plan which sets out its five-year vision for mid-Wales. The CJC's priorities are focused on its core functions and duty: economy, strategic planning, and transport.

- Welsh Government officers shared advisory notices recommending early preparation for the strategic development plans in August 2021.
- Recognising the particular local issue around the local development plan for Powys, it is positive that the CJC has made progress to consider its options for developing its Strategic Development Plan and has been proactively engaging with WG on this.
- The report that went to Strategic Development Planning sub-committee in December provided a comprehensive overview of the local context and issues together with comprehensive information around a range of options for developing the SDP.
- The CJC has agreed to put in place a dedicated team to support the delivery of its strategic development planning function. It has agreed that Ceredigion Council will take the lead on this function and an officer working group has been set up to work through the next steps.
- The CJC was also beginning to explore its options for developing its Regional Transport Plan. It was due to consider these options in November, but this meeting was cancelled. My team is not aware that the CJC has considered this item again more recently.
- I am aware that there is an existing regional transport arrangement which also involves Gwynedd County Council: the TraCC Partnership (Mid Wales Transportation). But that the CJC has not yet determined how TRaCC will interact with the CJC or what this will mean for the delivery of the CJC's regional transport planning function. The CJC's Regional Transport Planning sub-committee has not met. Therefore, the CJC's progress around this function is more limited than its strategic development function.
- I appreciate that there were some delays in resolving the financial status issues and that Welsh Government had not finalised the RTP guidance. However, Welsh Government has engaged with the CJsCs about the strategic development and transport planning functions so the CJC should have some understanding of expectations. There was also an event in January 2022 to discuss expectations.
- Despite the financial status issues, I would have liked to have seen more progress with the CJC's regional transport function. I would expect to see further progress from this point forward.
- The CJC has not decided whether it will merge the Mid Wales Growth Deal into the CJC although its draft corporate plan includes the Mid Wales Growth Deal long term vision to drive its economic priority. There is, therefore, some clear correlation between the two arrangements. The CJC will need to determine how these arrangements will work together. This will include working through any staffing and financial implications.
- I understand the CJC has recently had a workshop to discuss and agree its priorities and its future operation. On the back of that workshop, I would expect to see the CJC moving forward swiftly with its plans and be keen to understand its progress.

- The CJC has acknowledged in its draft corporate plan that it must meet a range of public sector duties. This includes Welsh language and equalities duties.
- Within its draft corporate plan, the CJC has set out its equalities vision and supporting objectives. The CJC has adopted the Integrated Impact Assessment used by Powys County Council to help it demonstrate its adherence to its equalities duties.
- It has not published its Child Poverty action plan or biodiversity report as required as part of its public sector duties.
- The CJC has reflected that it is in the early stages of its formation so still needs to determine how it will meet these duties. I would expect to see the CJC addressing its public sector duties at the earliest opportunity albeit I appreciate this will be in a manner proportionate to its role.

Partnerships

- **The CJC is very much in its early stages and has set out the need to consider how it can work with other partnerships but hasn't explored how it can make the most of the involvement of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority, beyond its role in strategic development planning.**
- I have commented frequently on the complex partnership landscape in Wales so am keen to see how CJCs are exploring how they relate to and work with existing partnerships. To make the most of existing resources and to tackle challenges more collaboratively.
- The CJC sees that its inception builds on a range of existing partnership arrangements in the region and beyond. And, in its corporate plan, it has emphasised that it needs to determine how it can work with these existing partnerships.
- During our interviews with CJC's officers, there was mention of engaging Gwynedd Council in its approach to regional transport given its membership in TRaCC. However, there has been no further progress on this.
- It will be key for the CJC to explore how it can engage and work with other bodies to make the most of resources and expertise within the region. I would like to see more progress on this when I do my next piece of work on CJCs.
- The CJC can co-opt other members onto its arrangements. It has agreed the membership of its sub-committees.
- Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority (BBNPA) is a statutory member of the CJC. It is represented on the Strategic Planning sub-committee and will be represented on the CJC's Governance and Audit Sub-committee. But beyond this, the CJC has not taken the opportunity to involve the BBNPA in its other roles and functions. Yet the BBNPA also has requirements around economic development and has a significant reach geographically. The BBNPA has the potential to help the CJC deliver its objectives and functions.

The CJC would benefit from exploring how it can work with the BBNPA to facilitate this.

Well-being of Future Generations Act

- **The CJC has not published its well-being objectives. It was required to do so by 1 April 2023. I would expect to see it progressing with these in line with legislative requirements.**
- Like the other named bodies under the WFG Act, the CJC must set and publish well-being objectives. It must act in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting those objectives and when taking steps to meet them.
- The CJC has set out its draft well-being objectives and well-being statement in its draft corporate plan. The CJC has not approved this plan yet.
- I have not done a detailed review of the extent to which the CJC has applied the sustainable development principle to the setting of its well-being objectives.
- Based on my high-level review of the draft well-being statement, I can see that its well-being objectives align with its core functions and that its statement covers some of the core elements set out in the legislation. This includes how it will contribute to meeting the national well-being goals and its arrangements for measuring progress with its plan.
- The CJC hasn't consulted upon its well-being objectives and plans to do this over the summer. I recognise that consultations on draft plans and policies do not always yield good response rates. Like other bodies, the CJC will need to explore alternative ways of involving the community, such as engaging communities earlier in discussions or drawing on existing information.
- It is positive that the CJC has already identified the need to involve the Public Services Board. It will need to determine the impact of the CJC's well-being objectives on those of other public bodies.
- More broadly, the CJC has a duty to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle. That framework has the potential to add value to how it plans and deliver its work. I will expect to see the CJC apply this principle in a meaningful way, across its functions. I will be undertaking examinations of the extent to which it has applied the sustainable development principle in future years, as required by the Act.
- My team has developed some positive indicators which provide an illustrative set of characteristics of what good looks like when organisations act in accordance with the sustainable development principle. The constituent bodies will be familiar with these, and it will be useful for the CJC to draw on these as it delivers its well-being objectives.

The CJC should consider this letter in tandem with my summary report, which provides an assessment of the collective position of the four CJsCs.

I intend to do further work over the next 18-24 months to assess the CJsCs' progress.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adrian Crompton', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

ADRIAN CROMPTON
Auditor General for Wales

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MID WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE

Governance and Audit Sub Committee

Date of Meeting – 25th April 2024

Purpose of Report	To provide the inaugural meeting of the Governance and Audit Sub Committee with an update report from the Chief Executive of the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee.
Decision Sought:	To note the content of the report.
Report Author	Eifion Evans, CEO Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee
Finance Officer	Duncan Hall, Section 151 Officer
Legal Officer	Clive Pinney – Monitoring Officer

1. Introduction:

- 1.1 This report is intended to provide Members of the Governance and Audit Sub Committee of the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee (MWCJC) with an update on the establishment and progress of work of the MWCJC.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provides a framework for regional collaboration through a more coherent, consistent and democratically controlled mechanism called Corporate Joint Committees ('CJCs').
- 2.2 A CJC is a separate corporate body which can employ staff, hold assets and budgets and undertake functions and are part of the 'local government family' and where appropriate, are subject to the same powers and duties as principal councils in the way they operate.

2.3 The MWCJC which is made up of Ceredigion and Powys Local Authorities is one of four CJC established in Wales alongside The North Wales CJC, The South East Wales CJC and The South West Wales CJC. In addition, Bannau Brycheiniog have a member on the CJC in relation to Strategic Development Planning.

2.4 The three specific areas that are incorporated into the MWCJC which commenced its functions from 30th June 2022 are as follows:

- Strategic Development Planning – the MWCJC must prepare a Strategic Development Plan
- Regional Transport Planning – the MWCJC must prepare a Regional Transport Plan
- Economic Wellbeing

2.5 Membership

The CJC consists of:

- Leader PCC (Chair)
- Leader CCC (Vice Chair)
- BBNPA Member (Strategic Development Planning only)
- Chief Executive Officer (Ceredigion County Council)
- Chief Executive Officer (Powys County Council)
- Monitoring Officer (Powys County Council)
- Chief Financial Officer (Ceredigion County Council)

The role of the Chair and CEO will rotate annually at the AGM of the CJC.

2.6 Sub Committees

The following Sub Committees have been established and are chaired by the respective Portfolio Holders from the two constituent authorities, rotated on an annual basis.

- Strategic Development Planning Sub Committee
- Regional Transport Planning Sub Committee
- Economic Well-being Sub Committee

In addition, the following governing sub committees are required to be established in accordance with the legislation:

- Standards Sub Committee
- Governance and Audit Sub Committee
- Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2.7 CJC Lead Functions

The following table reflects how the various lead functions within Ceredigion and Powys County Council have been divided up to support the governance dynamics of the CJC:

Lead Authority	Function
Ceredigion County Council	Finance / S151
Powys County Council	Legal / Monitoring Officer
Powys County Council	Internal Audit
Powys County Council / Ceredigion County Council	Translation of documents / simultaneous translation at meetings
Powys County Council	Democratic Services
Powys County Council	CJC Programme Support

3. Progress Update

3.1 Meetings

The MWCJC has been meeting on a quarterly basis since it's inaugural meeting in January 2022. Member and Officer appointments have been made to the CJC itself and all the sub committees, governance arrangements are in place and standing orders and a constitution have been agreed.

The Strategic Development Planning and the Regional Transport Planning sub committee's have met a number of times and will continue to meet on a quarterly basis. The Economic Wellbeing Sub Committee has not yet but it has been agreed that the Mid Wales Growth Deal Board will be encompassed into this Sub Committee and will be called 'Economic Wellbeing and Growth Deal Sub Committee'.

The Overview and Scrutiny Subcommittee has met once on 5th December 2023 with the Governance and Audit, and Standards Subcommittee meeting today.

3.2 Delivery

The legislation is prescriptive in that the MWCJC must produce a Regional Transport Plan by March 2025 with a draft version in place by December 2024 and a Strategic Development Plan Delivery Agreement by 31st March 2024, however progress on the

SDP has been delayed due to uncertainty around Powys County Council's delivery of a LDP or SDP or both. A paper is being taken to PCC Cabinet in May to agree a decision on this and a SDP workshop has been arranged for June 2024 to agree the way forward on the SDP. There are no specific statutory requirements for the Economic Wellbeing Sub Committee however it is envisaged that it will own the Strategic Vision of the Mid Wales Growth Deal.

To date the MWCJC has adopted a 'bare minimum' approach with no staff being employed via the CJC itself and resources in the respective organisations limited. Funding is being provided by Welsh Government to support the delivery of the RTP until 2025, however no funding has been provided to support the delivery of the SDP.

3.3 Budget

Whilst a grant of £250k for each CJC was provided by Welsh Government for the initial establishment of CJC's ongoing operational costs of CJC's are subject to contributions from the constituted local authorities.

The Budget for 2024/25 was approved on the 29th January 2024. The General Budget totalled £144k, with an RTP budget of £100k and SDP of £73k making a total of £317k. The Annual Return for year ending March 2023 has been approved by Audit Wales and was presented to the CJC in January 2024. For information a copy is provided with the agenda for the Governance and Audit Subcommittee meeting.

3.4 Corporate Plan

A Corporate Plan outlining the strategic direction of the CJC for the next 4-5 years has been produced and adopted by the CJC.

Although the work of the region is in its infancy, the plan sets out the purpose and direction for joint work between Powys County Council and Ceredigion County Council in the areas of the economy and transport. In addition, the two Councils will collaborate with Bannau Brycheiniog National Park on the creation of a Strategic Development Plan for the region.

The CJC has set out a Vision and Wellbeing Objectives, alongside an Integrated Impact Assessment, as part of the Corporate Plan.

The three public bodies involved have all worked together for many years on a range of matters, and the creation of the CJC will formalise this relationship and set it in a legal framework.

A copy of the plan is attached as an appendix to this report.

4. Integrated Impact Assessment:

- 4.1 There is no requirement for an Integrated Impact Assessment for this report as the setting up of the CJC is underpinned by legislation and this report is to establish financial arrangements in accordance with legislation.

5. Workforce Impacts:

- 5.1 Currently any employment within the MWCJC will be undertaken by constituent authorities and recharged back to the MWCJC taking due account of any associated taxation issues.

6. Legal Impacts:

- 6.1 Part 5 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provides for the establishment, through regulations, of CJsCs and compliance will be had with this and other legislative obligations in the establishment of CJsCs. The Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee Regulations came into force on 1st April 2021 and set out that the CJC should be established and the time limits for the discharging of specific functions.

7. Risk Management Impacts:

- 7.1 Failure to establish the MWCJC and the associated Sub Committees is in breach of its obligations exposing itself to legal challenge. In addition, suitable arrangements must be put in place to ensure that the constituent authorities and the national park authority are able to fulfil their legal obligations in establishing the MWCJC.

8. Consultation:

- 8.1 There is no requirement for public consultation in respect of this report.

9. Reasons for Proposed Decision:

- 9.1 To provide members of the Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee with an update on the establishment and delivery to date of the MWCJC.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1. Members note the content of this report.

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Cyd-Bwyllgor Corfforedig y Canolbarth
Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee

Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee
Corporate Plan
2023 – 2028



**Bannau
Brycheiniog**



Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council



Draft – For Consultation 2023

Contents

1.0 Foreword

1.1 Introduction – Corporate Joint Committees

2.0 The Mid Wales Region – An Overview

- 2.1 Our Economy
- 2.2 Our People
- 2.3 Labour Market
- 2.4 Learning and Skills
- 2.5 Deprivation
- 2.6 Transport

3.0 Our Purpose and Vision

4.0 Our Priorities for the Region

- 4.1 The Economy
- 4.2 Regional Transport Plan
- 4.3 Strategic Development Planning

5.0 Wellbeing Statement and Objectives

- 5.1 Statement
- 5.2 Objectives

6.0 Alignment with National Goals

7.0 Action Plan

- 7.1 The Economy
- 7.2 Transport
- 7.3 Strategic Planning Development

8.0 Regional Partners

9.0 Public Sector Duties



Appendices

Welsh Government – Strategies and Policies

- [Future Wales – The National Plan 2040](#)
- [Llwybr Newydd – The Wales Transport Strategy 2021](#)
- [The Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 - National Wellbeing Goals](#)
- [The Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016 and Biodiversity Duty 2023-2028](#)

Governance, Administration and Resources

- Background
- Support Services
- Standing Orders
- Constitution
- Financial Impacts
- Equality Act
- Sustainable Development
- Workforce Impacts
- Risk Management Impacts
- Resources
- Budget 2023/24
- Other Financial Matters

Equalities – Integrated Impact Assessment

Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) – Ceredigion County Council and Powys County Council



Ceredigion Draft
Strategic Equality Plan

[Strategic Equality Plan & Objectives - Ceredigion County Council](#)

STRONGER
— fairer —
GREENER

[Our Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan - Powys County Council](#)

Sustainability

Performance Management and Monitoring

Scrutiny and Audit

Links to other documents: -

Integrated Impact Assessment

[Agendas, Minutes, Reports of the CJC Board](#)

[Growing Mid Wales Strategy](#)

[Wellbeing and Future Generation \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)

[Llwybr Newydd – Transport Strategy 2021](#)

[Future Wales – National Plan 2040](#)

[The Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#)

Corporate Plans for:

[Powys County Council](#)

[Ceredigion County Council](#)

[Bannau Brycheiniog National Park \(Management Plan\)](#)



1.0 Foreword

From the Chair and Vice Chair of the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee

We are pleased to introduce this document which is in response to legislation established by Welsh Government that requires the creation of Regional Corporate Joint Committees (CJC's) across Wales. The Mid Wales Region comprises Powys and Ceredigion County Councils who will establish and oversee the strategic direction of the Economy and its Transport needs. In addition, the region will develop a Strategic Development Plan which will also include the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park.

Given the unique circumstances of Mid Wales we see this as a clear opportunity for the region to become a strong voice for rural growth and regeneration across Wales.

The important thing in responding to this challenge is to be clear about how working together will help improve the lives of people living in Mid Wales. The two Councils and the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park already work together on multiple issues and there has always been a positive and productive relationship between both Members and Officers.

The work of the Mid Wales CJC is at an early stage and clarification will be needed in relation to Transport and Development Planning particularly in respect of resource

requirements. We will also work positively with Government and the OECD to determine the right role and function for Economic Wellbeing. We understand our responsibilities to make timely progress and have established sub-committees to progress this important work.

This Corporate Plan sets out our direction of travel for the next five years. It is strategic in nature reflecting the primary responsibility of individual local authorities to deliver services in their own areas. We are committed to sharing resources across services in the region, where we can make a real difference to the lives of our residents.

Chair of the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Councillor James Gibson Watt



Vice Chair of the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Councillor Bryan Davies



1.1 Introduction

Corporate Joint Committees

The Welsh Government introduced legislation in 2021 to formalise the way in which local authorities work together. This legislation is called ‘The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021’ and provided for the creation of Corporate Joint Committees. These Committees are made up of Local Government Authorities which in the Mid Wales Region include Ceredigion County Council, Powys County Council, and the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park (BBNP) (the latter of which is involved in matters relating specifically to strategic planning).

The Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee will work together on the service areas of Strategic Planning, Economic Wellbeing, and Transport. The two Councils and the BBNP already have a long record of collaborating on areas of the economy under the auspices of the Mid Wales Growth Deal and Growing Mid Wales.

In addition, the Councils have long collaborated on matters relating to Transport through the TraCC Partnership (Trafnidiaeth Canolbarth Cymru / Mid Wales Transportation). This is reflected in the Joint Mid Wales Local Transport Plan which was published in 2015.

The Corporate Joint Committee is made up of the Leaders of Powys and Ceredigion County Councils and the Vice Chair of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park. The Council Leaders

can vote on all matters included in the CJC agreement, and the Chair of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park can vote on matters relating to Strategic Planning.

This document sets out at a strategic level; what we are doing, how we are doing it, and the governance arrangements that are in place to ensure compliance with Welsh Government legislation and our duties as a public sector organisation. More importantly, however, this document sets out how the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee will seek to improve the lives of people living in Mid Wales.



2.0 The Mid Wales Region –

An Overview

Mid Wales is one of the most sparsely populated areas of the country representing 34% of the land mass of Wales. The region is bordered by fourteen local authority areas, two of which are in England. The population is approximately 205,900 which is both declining and ageing. The more westerly part of the region is one of the Welsh-speaking heartlands of Wales.

The region has several challenging economic conditions which need to be addressed not least a reduction of economic activity over a sustained period. As a predominantly rural area, transport continues to be a challenge for both work and leisure, especially given that the cost of energy has increased significantly. Although planning for local development through Local Development Plans (LDPs) is a responsibility for Local Authorities to administer there also needs to be a Strategic Development Plan (SDP) which aligned with Welsh Planning Policy, will be a feature of this plan.

2.1 Our Economy

The Mid Wales economy is often characterised as a large and predominantly rural region. It is known for its natural beauty, strong cultural identity and heritage.

It is less well-known as a land of untapped economic opportunity - where business survival rates outclass the Welsh average; where our natural and academic assets offer an obvious choice for cutting-edge research providing strong opportunities to create new industrial clusters, where there is a strong yet diverse labour market – with strategic commuter links within and outside the region to other parts of Wales and cross-border into England.

The geography of the Mid Wales economy is a critical component in driving and supporting intra-regional growth across Wales and the UK, where the total of its economic impact is larger than the sum of its individual parts. The region borders North and South Wales as well as the English Counties of Shropshire and Herefordshire. The impact of other regions on the Mid Wales economy is critical and plans need to reflect this interdependence.

The region's economy has its challenges in addressing the structural weaknesses that are currently hindering the potential of our residents and businesses to flourish. Poor connectivity, low Gross Value Added (GVA) per head, limited skills infrastructure, grid constraints and lack of supporting business infrastructure all play their part in limiting the region's potential to take advantage of our opportunities. However, whilst the challenges we face are not unique – the opportunities we have are indeed distinctive and rooted within our region.

An Overview - Our Economy



- 205,000 people employed
- 95,400 employed
- % employed > Welsh average

- Home to two Universities (Aberystwyth and UWTSU)
- Home to the Centre for Alternative Technology (also offering HE courses)
- More than 95% of Aberystwyth's research is internationally recognised
- Educational attainment at Level 2 is 7.5% higher than the Welsh average
- 38.8% residents with NVQ4+

Notable Strengths

- Agriculture
- Food & Drink
- Tourism
- Higher-Value Manufacturing
- Defence & Security Assets

Generating:

- £3.6bn GVA annually
- £17,509 GVA per head

- 6966 km² of land (39% of Wales)
- 7.25m visitors attracted annually to the region's outstanding natural and cultural landscapes

2.2 Our People

The demographic profile of the region presents both challenges and opportunities.

At an overall population of 205,900, Mid Wales is characterised by an ageing population and a net out-migration of young people. Since 2014, the region has seen an overall decline in its population of around 1%. The working age population is less than the Welsh and UK average and is predominantly characterised by higher proportions of 50-64 and 65+ year olds.

There is a relatively small share of working age people due to the higher proportions of 50-64 and 65+ year olds. Comparatively, Mid Wales has proportionally fewer people below the working age – though the figures are partly skewed due to the student population in key locations in Ceredigion.

Population projections for Mid Wales currently estimate a 16% decline in the working age population and 37% increase in the 65+ age group to 2039. Unless addressed this predicted trend is likely to reduce the region's workforce over the next 15 years.

2.3 Labour Market

There are some 91,000 people in employment in Mid Wales, with economic activity rates in line with Welsh and UK averages, driven by high levels of self-employment. Levels of unemployment in the region are comparatively low at 3.7% in July 2022 and the region has seen an improvement in unemployment numbers compared to Wales since 2001.

Despite this, underemployment, low earnings and seasonal employment remain key challenges. Average full-time weekly earnings for example were 85% of the UK average in 2016 and 97% of the Wales average.

Over the past five years, employment in Mid Wales has decreased by around 5.4%. Jobs are particularly concentrated in Health, Manufacturing and Education. The largest increases in employment growth have been in Professional Services, Information and Communication, Agriculture, forestry and fishing. Other sectors have also demonstrated significant growth, illustrating the potential for further expansion in the future.

2.4 Learning & Skills

The region has two Universities which contribute to high level skills leading to world class research and development, as well as a vibrant and growing economy. The recent creation of the Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership is ensuring local input into the matching of employer skills needs with education and skills providers. This has led to learning pathways to local employment and apprenticeships.

Mid Wales performs well in educational attainment with levels of achievement at GCSE level exceeding the Welsh average. The proportion of young people Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEETS) is low, while the qualifications profile of Mid Wales performs better than the Welsh average – but with lower rates of older people upskilling.

Despite these strengths, skills gaps and recruitment difficulties are commonplace amongst Mid Wales employers. Apprenticeships and further education delivery are challenged by the rural nature of the region. Employer investment in training is currently relatively low, possibly reflecting the high proportion of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Attracting more young people to live, work and study in Mid Wales is vital for inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

For the region to thrive it must reduce the existing trend of young people leaving the area for education and jobs and must be able to retain and attract talent by creating new high value employment opportunities.

2.5 Deprivation

The Mid Wales region has a comparatively low level of deprivation when measured with the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD), with Powys being the second least deprived Local Authority area in Wales. Statistical measures do not tend to capture the true nature of rural disadvantage.

Poverty in Mid Wales is variable and often hidden due to the rurality and demographics of the region – therefore not resulting in demonstrable concentrations of poverty in datasets (except from pockets identified in some of our larger towns). This often masks issues of rural deprivation in terms of access to services, isolation and fuel poverty across the region.

2.6 Transport

Transport connectivity both inside and outside of Mid Wales is crucial to economic flows and future growth. The region has 945 km (587 miles) of Trunk and A roads connecting the region with North and South Wales and east to the West Midlands. There are also two railway corridors (Cambrian Main line/Coast and the Heart of Wales line) which run north-south and east-west. Rail links in Mid Wales are characterised by low service frequency, slow line speeds and limited direct services to major UK cities with the only regular principal service being the two-hourly Aberystwyth to Birmingham International through services.

There is a need to improve journey time reliability and capacity, by improving the safety and resilience of the network to support and grow the transition to a low carbon economy. Investment in key strategic corridors to ensure resilience and infrastructure to provide a net zero transport provision across the Mid Wales Road network. This is vitally important to support access to service, tourism and freight, especially in relation to the A487 and links to Fishguard, in addition to the A483, A458 cross-border routes and the A44 across the region.

Due to its rurality, Mid Wales has a high dependence on the private car for transport and less than 1% of road miles are driven by buses. The region also has below average take up of electric vehicles with limited charging points compared to the UK average.

3.0 Our Purpose and Vision

In developing a vision for the Mid Wales Region that reflects the needs of both Councils and the National Park it is essential that we focus on priorities that are shared.

The Mid Wales Region has a range of challenges that are common. These include, amongst others; the level of rurality, an aging population, access to services, the Welsh Language, environmental protection and improvement, reducing inequalities, the economy and employment opportunities, transport and accessibility.

The Corporate Joint Committee is united in focusing on the changes that need to be made to improve wellbeing for our communities across the region in the areas of the Economy, Transport and Strategic Planning. The majority of services will of course continue to be delivered by the individual local authorities. Where there is mutual benefit and advantage by working together strategically on matters relating to the economy, transport and planning, we will seek new ways of working that are productive, impactful, and efficient.

Having considered the shared strategic priorities of each Council and the BBNP, the region sets out the following vision statement which we believe reflects our collective aspirations.

Vision for Mid Wales 2022-2027

‘Mid Wales will be a region that enables and encourages sustainable, environmentally friendly, and inclusive places to live, where residents have access to plentiful employment opportunities, culturally rich and diverse communities, and high-quality education, skills, and training. The Local Authorities will collaborate strategically on matters relating to the economy, transport and strategic planning.

Mid Wales will be a strong voice for rural growth and regeneration and will promote inclusivity, the Welsh language, and equality of opportunity.

The Vision will function as an overarching guide to the way in which services are developed on a regional basis. Although matters relating to the Economy, Transport and Strategic Planning are all connected, strategies and policies can sometimes be developed in isolation. The regional Vision will function as an overarching principle by which these services will be developed for the future.

4.0 Our Priorities for the Region

The three areas that the Corporate Joint Committee will focus on are limited to economy, transport and planning development. These are service areas that can benefit from increased collaboration across the region. The following paragraphs provide further detail about work that will be progressed over the coming years, providing demonstrable benefit to our communities.

4.1 The Economy

The region has been collaborating with a wide range of partners for many years with a particularly focus on the economy. This resulted in a Strategic Economic Plan which has recently been updated and is partly reproduced here to represent the strategic direction of the region.

This update to the Growing Mid Wales Strategic Economic Plan highlights our collective ambition and the economic potential for Mid Wales. It sets out the future that we want to build together to achieve sustainable and relevant economic growth, where our people and businesses have parity of opportunity to grow their ideas and have their potential nurtured. We have identified opportunities for direct public intervention in public infrastructure and our workforce alongside private investment opportunities in key regional assets. We are confident that this combined approach will deliver strong results as part of a team approach.

The region is well-known as a predominantly rural area, accounting for 39% of the land mass of Wales; but is less well-known as a place where there is a wealth of opportunity waiting to be unlocked.

The region has significant opportunities both to strengthen existing economic sectors and stimulate economic drivers that will create growth and investment in regional businesses and the labour market. At a time when there is considerable economic uncertainty due to a range of externalities, it is crucial that all parts of Wales and the UK play their part in strengthening the economic resilience and productivity of their regional economies.

There is significant opportunity to take advantage of existing private sector ambition to develop assets of regional importance with tangible and significant economic impact, from our strengths in our research capability, natural landscapes, skilled workforce and industry.

The region's economy however has its challenges. Market failure is prevalent following decades of under-investment and structural decline. Whilst there have been encouraging signs of employment and business growth in key sectors across the region (construction, tourism, food & manufacturing), there remains a significant productivity challenge owing to the underlying structural weaknesses of the economy (comparatively narrow economic base, poor transport links, changing population demographic) that could continue to reinforce a cycle of decline unless addressed.

Context

Since the first Growing Mid Wales Vision Document was agreed in early 2020, there have been several major events which have caused the economic context to fundamentally change. It was important to update the document to consider this changed context, and the greater challenges they pose in developing the regional economy of Mid Wales.

Coronavirus Pandemic

The economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic on Mid Wales cannot be understated. The business demography of the region, made up of predominantly SMEs, meant that many small businesses struggled to survive, with some businesses actively opting to cease trading. The tourism sector – one of the largest employers in the region – was also disproportionately affected. Now in recovery mode, the historically low levels of unemployment in the region have increased, reflecting a rise in the long-term sick which may be partly attributable to the pandemic.

EU Transition

Britain leaving the EU has resulted in much change for Mid Wales businesses. In addition to supply chain issues and increased costs for exporters due to changes with customs and border tariffs, sectors such as hospitality and agriculture report significant issues with labour supply due to the loss of migrant workers from the EU.

Economic Downturn and Cost of Living Crisis

The cost-of-living crisis is fundamentally caused by higher inflation, and low wage growth leaving many households worse off in real terms – paying more for their food, energy and fuel. The crisis has been exacerbated by short-term factors, such as the Ukraine war, but the pressure on living standards has long-term trends, such as low productivity growth and increased market power of firms.

Climate Emergency

The need to consider our impacts on the environment and targets set both nationally and locally will be essential given the current climate emergency. This includes how we continue to support the growth and development of the Mid Wales economy whilst moving towards Net Zero. Both Welsh and UK Governments have released several strategies to set out plans and priorities for meeting our climate change targets.

Energy

Energy prices and our current dependency on importing energy into the UK are issues that have recently come sharply into focus as a result on the war in Ukraine. These issues relate strongly to the climate emergency agenda and the need for greater amounts of our energy to come from renewable energy sources. In addition, the region is severely constrained by the ability to export energy due to energy infrastructure capacity.

Funding

EU Transition has seen fundamental changes to the way regional investment funding is allocated and delivered, resulting in a more complex funding and delivery landscape. Local Authorities in Wales have had to adapt quickly to take advantage of opportunities arising from the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund, Community Renewal Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund. The region will continue to monitor funding announcements to ensure we are well placed to take advantage of future opportunities to secure investment.

Delivery Landscape

As a result of the changes to the funding landscape, the delivery landscape has become more fragmented and harder to navigate. Key backbone operations that were delivered on a pan-Wales basis under EU funding have ceased to operate, leaving strategic gaps which may or may not be filled by new funding.

The Challenges to Overcome

Since the establishment of the Growing Mid Wales Partnership in 2015, partners have seen a strengthening of support for, and focus on growing the Mid Wales economy. While much has been achieved to ensure a strong focus on pursuing regional economic growth, more needs to be done. It will require much stronger working and recognition of the Mid Wales economy across sectors and institutions – with the full support of both Governments to not only support growth opportunities, but also to invest in our underlying economic and social infrastructure.

Economic performance

Despite several opportunities and positive improvements in the regional economy, Mid Wales continues to lag behind other Welsh and UK regions on several key issues:

LOW & LAGGING PRODUCTIVITY: Mid Wales continues to lag behind other Welsh and UK regions in real and per head terms due to the seasonality and structure of its employment base.

A DECLINING, AGEING POPULATION: Rural depopulation, especially of young people, and a changing demographic - demonstrating the 'pinched middle' of a relatively high older population and a proportionately low working age population, and the resulting effect this can have on Welsh language strongholds.

NARROW AND VULNERABLE ECONOMIC BASE: Leading to employment and productivity imbalances. The largest GVA contributors are manufacturing, real estate and wholesale and retail – whilst agriculture employs the most, it contributes comparatively less GVA. Employment seasonality also adds vulnerability.

PROJECTED EMPLOYMENT DECLINE: forecasts show the Welsh economy growing by 1.7% during the period 20 (+ 24,000 jobs) while the Mid Wales economy is forecasted to decline 3.45% (reduction of 3,352 jobs) – whilst the UK looks set to grow by 7.4% over the same period.

STATIC AND WEAKENING LABOUR MARKET: gaps in skills provision and infrastructure to adequately meet industry demands are exacerbated by a lack of focus on the issue in Mid Wales. Weaknesses in regional skills infrastructure exacerbates the lack of employment and educational opportunities – leading to a reducing equality of opportunity and labour mobility whilst reinforcing out-migration. Powys' commuting outflows of -3,495 especially highlight the need to improve employment opportunities.

MARKET FAILURE: Underlying structural economic weaknesses aligned with decades of under-investment by the public sector has exacerbated market failure. Market failure is prevalent throughout the economy and can be clearly evidenced through weak and relatively static commercial and residential build rates, declining and narrowing business base and the inadequate state of our digital, road and energy grid infrastructure – which is in critical need of public sector intervention.

THE HIDDEN NATURE OF A RURAL ECONOMY: relatively strong employment and low unemployment data masks low pay and underemployment. The high self-employment and home working data combined with low incomes is masking rural

poverty which is a real cause for concern amongst local authorities and policy makers.

There is also a new economic context to consider. Since the drafting of the first GMW Vision document in 2020, the macro-economic context has greatly changed. As well as continuing to recover from the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, Mid Wales businesses and residents have had to navigate new legislation and arrangements arising out of EU transition, as well as the economic downturn partially triggered by the Russia-Ukraine war and the resulting cost of living crisis. Long standing issues will become even tougher to address and will require more focused and concentrated effort to make a step change to the Mid Wales economy.

Addressing these issues will require a step change in the way we collectively work and will require a significant set of interventions to both address these trends by providing the basis for new higher value economic growth and attract a new, economically mobile population. Tackling these issues will not be easy, or inexpensive. However, we are collectively clear that as a region if we are to see the regional economy perform as it should; and if we are to take advantage of the opportunities available to us – then it must be the joint focus of regional partners and both Governments to address.

Our Ambition

Our ambition is for Mid Wales to take full advantage of the opportunities available to create and support economic and social growth by overcoming its challenges to become a fairer, smarter region that contributes to its full potential to address its productivity challenge.



Our Vision for Mid Wales in 2035

By 2035, Mid Wales will be:

“An enterprising and distinctive region delivering sustainable economic growth for future generations driven by innovation, skills, connectivity and more productive jobs supporting prosperous and bilingual communities.”

Through collaborative and integrated working, we will build on our unique assets to ensure that the region’s economy is recognised by the following characteristics:



ENTERPRISING – open for business, new and old. A place to start and grow enterprise to enhance regional productivity with a good quality of life.



SKILLED – a skilled and flexible labour market supported by academic and vocational learning that responds to industry demands that reverses current population trends.



INNOVATIVE – a test bed for innovation, developing new products and processes capitalising on existing research and industry strengths and creating new/strengthening existing industrial clusters.



CONNECTED – a fully connected region, unlocking its economic potential driving business growth and innovation and improving social and labour mobility.



PRODUCTIVE – a strong, productive economy providing the right conditions for business to generate better quality, higher paid jobs alongside better employment opportunity.



PROSPEROUS – a regional economy that is rooted in fairness and equality of opportunity with accessible training and employment pathways.



DISTINCTIVE – a region with a unique natural and cultural landscape & heritage, offering an exceptional quality of life and potential to lead UK decarbonisation and clean growth.



The Mid Wales Region

4.2 Transport

Transport connectivity both inside and outside of Mid Wales is crucial to economic flows and future growth. The region has 945 km (587 miles) of Trunk and A roads connecting the region with North and South Wales and east to the West Midlands. There are also two railway corridors (Cambrian Main line/Coast and the Heart of Wales line) which run north-south and east-west. Rail links in Mid Wales are characterised by low service frequency, slow line speeds and limited direct services to major UK cities with the only regular principal service being the two-hourly Aberystwyth to Birmingham International through services.

There is a need to improve journey time reliability and capacity, by improving the safety and resilience of the network to support and grow the transition to a low carbon economy. Investment in key routes such as the A483/A489 Newtown Bypass and the A487 Dyfi Bridge north of Machynlleth provide resilience to the Mid Wales' Road network. Continued investment is required to secure these strategic corridors of labour and goods mobility to the future – especially in relation to the A487 and the need to improve links to Fishguard as well as the A483, A458 cross-border routes and the A44 across the region. Due to its rurality, Mid Wales has a high dependence on the private car for transport and less than 1% of road miles are driven by buses. The region also has below average take up of electric vehicles with limited charging points compared to the UK average.

Joint Mid Wales Local Transport Plan 2015

The TraCC Joint Mid Wales Transport Plan 2015 sets out a vision for transport in Mid Wales. This vision was developed by working with a range of stakeholders whilst developing the Plan. Although this plan and vision was developed some years ago it is still as relevant today.

Vision for Transport in Mid Wales (LTP 2015)

‘The Mid Wales Local Authorities will plan for and deliver in partnership, an integrated and affordable transport system that facilitates economic development, ensures access for all to services and opportunities, sustains and improves the quality of community life, and makes an active contribution to the management of carbon and the quality of the environment.’

Since this vision was created, the 2015 plan has been held over whilst delivery has progressed, and more recently, new guidance from Welsh Government for the new Regional Transport Plan (RTP) has now been issued and development of the new plan will commence in 2024. It will set out the case for change and a delivery plan for the Mid Wales Region that reflects both Welsh Government Guidance, Strategy and current local and regional need.

The Mid Wales Region

4.3 Strategic Development Planning

The following is an extract from Welsh Governments National Development Framework ‘Future Wales – The National Plan 2040’, which is the highest tier of plan in Wales:-

‘Our planning system is development plan led. Development plans are prepared at national, regional and local scales, with the three tiers together in combination comprising ‘the development plan.’ The Welsh Government by producing Future Wales contributes the national tier of the development plan. This is the highest tier of development plan. Strategic Development Plans cover regional and sub-regional scales and Local Development Plans consider issues at the local scale. The three tiers of the development plan should be aligned and complement each other. Strategic Development Plans, which have not yet been prepared in any region, are required to be in conformity with Future Wales. Similarly, Local Development Plans must be in conformity with Future Wales and the Strategic Development Plan for their area.’

Strategic Development Planning for the region will identify, in a spatial planning context, the most effective and appropriate Planning Policies for the region under which Local Development Plan Lites (LDP lites) will be produced. In policy terms such Plans will need to be in alignment with Future Wales and national planning policy and guidance. Welsh Government have been clear in stating that it does not seek to take decisions that are most appropriately taken at a regional or local level but to provide strategic direction for all scales of planning. At the same time there is a clear requirement for strategic and local plans to conform with 'Future Wales,' and the spatial strategy.

The development of a Strategic Development Plan (SDP) will take significant time with the full process taking between 5 and 6 years to complete. In addition, there will need to be sufficient dedicated resources to undertake this work which does not currently exist in budgetary terms.

The Corporate Joint Committee have established an SDP subgroup whereby a number of options of how to develop the SDP have been considered these could include creating a regional team or working within existing planning functions. At present some of the members of the SDP are progressing their own LDPs, which presents a resource and recruitment challenge. The CJC has agreed a dedicated resource is required to undertake the preparatory work for an SDP which would include managing timetables, resources, budgets and other necessary infrastructure with a view to publishing a Delivery Agreement for ministerial sign off as resources allow.

Once a regional SDP has been created, by 2029/30, LDP Lites will be developed concluding in a Regional Strategic Development Plan and individual Council/National Park LDP Lites by 2032/33.

This approach is not without significant challenge in that the creation of an SDP team will require additional resource which is yet to be identified. In addition, there is already a sparsity of recruits for Planning posts across the region and the recruitment to an SDP team would deplete existing teams, potentially leaving gaps in resource and capacity at a local level.

In addition, although Ceredigion and Bannau Brycheiniog LDP's are not timebound with a 'drop dead date' for when they expire, Powys' LDP is currently time expired. Given the resource demand to complete a new LDP this may impact on the availability of Officers to contribute to a regional SDP. Clarification is currently being sought from Welsh Government on the implications for Powys of moving directly to the production of an SDP in preference to continuing with a new LDP.

Notwithstanding the benefits that will come from a more strategic approach to Planning Development, there also remains significant challenge within the region especially in relation to Special Areas of Conservation (SACS) that impact on the River Wye, Teifi and Usk. In addition, given the reliance on agriculture, issues relating to phosphates and the imminent TAN15 flood zones will need careful

consideration especially in how they impact on limiting housing and economic development.

DRAFT

5.0 Wellbeing Statement and Objectives

Contribution to the national well-being goals.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 seeks to improve the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of Wales by requiring public bodies to work together to create a sustainable Wales.

It is intended to help create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. There are 7 national well-being goals that set out a shared vision for all public bodies to work towards which are: -

- 1. A Prosperous Wales**
- 2. A Resilient Wales**
- 3. A Healthier Wales**
- 4. A More Equal Wales**
- 5. A Wales of Cohesive Communities**
- 6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language**
- 7. A Globally Responsible Wales**

The individual Councils and the National Park have already set out how they will be contributing to the national wellbeing goals in their respective Corporate Strategies and Well-Being plans. It is essential, however, that we assess how the CJC Regional Strategy also contributes to the national wellbeing goals. The following section of this Plan sets out the CJC's Corporate Well-being Objectives.

In addition, the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee will in accordance with the Well-Being and Future Generations Act 2015 (WBFG) abide by Welsh Governments 'Five Ways of Working' principles which ensure that plans are long term, preventative, integrated, collaborative, and involve stakeholders. This will ensure that the sustainable development duty placed on public bodies throughout Wales is embedded in the way that each organisation works.

As this duty has been in place for many years, all the public bodies who are party to the Mid Wales CJC Corporate Plan are already experienced with applying these ways of working. As the Mid Wales CJC is in the early stages of development, detailed assessments of how our work will comply with these principles are yet to be applied. It is fully accepted, however, that this will need to be done in in both a transparent and measured way as plans develop. In the meantime, and for clarity, we have set out below how we will ensure the 'Five Ways of Working' will be used to test our sustainable development duty. These principles have been used in the development of our Wellbeing Objectives and will continue to be used as the region progresses their implementation.

Long Term

The Future Generations Act has long been adopted by public bodies across Wales as a government policy that guides how such organisations operate. It is fully recognised that decisions and plans need to consider how any resulting actions may impact on the wellbeing of our communities in the long term. For example, the development of the Growth Deal has already used the Five Ways of Working in its development. As detailed project plans develop, assessments will be used to ensure the long-term impact of projects are fully understood before approval to proceed is given. As work on Regional Transport and Strategic Development Plans are developed, similar detailed assessments will also be undertaken at each stage of the process.

Prevention

It is clear that given the challenges facing the environment, health, and society in general, that we ensure that decisions taken in the future avoid repeating mistakes of the past. In particular, careful consideration needs to be given to the often-unforeseen consequences of actions that are sometimes taken in isolation, and the wider impact they may have. Policies and strategies will need to be tested using techniques such as 'scenario planning' to identify threats and opportunities so that adverse impacts are avoided or at least mitigated against. The application of a detailed Impact Assessment using the Powys County Council IA template has helped to assess the Corporate Plans impact on a wide range of matters including the environment, equalities, Welsh Language, and of course the National Wellbeing Goals.

Integration

The basis used for the Wellbeing goals adopted for this Corporate Plan has been the existing Corporate Plans of each of the constituent CJC members. These existing plans had already been developed with the Future Generations Act as a guiding principle and as such all the plans have been tested against the WFG Act. This, in itself, evidences an integrated approach to the creation of the Mid Wales Corporate Plan. As the plan is developed into more detailed actions, careful consideration will be given to existing and emerging plans across Wales to ensure an ongoing integrated approach. Given the regions significant border with England, the principle of integration will also include partners across the border.

Collaboration

The Mid Wales CJC is physically at the heart of Wales. As such the constituent bodies have long recognised the importance of working in ways that ensure organisations both within, and outside the area are included in the development of plans. The term collaboration has been a watch word amongst CJC members for many years and can be evidence in a wide range of initiatives. For example, the development of the Growing Mid Wales Partnership (GMWP), which has been in

existence for many years, is a practical example of collaboration in practice relating to the region's economy. This collaboration has been used to inform the creation of the Mid Wales Growth Deal and the partnership is expected to continue in its role for many years to come.

Involvement

As with all public body 'Strategic Plans,' this Corporate Plan has been subject to wide ranging consultation before being finalised. It has been stated throughout the document that the Mid Wales CJC will develop and mature further over the coming years. As it does so, more detailed plans will come forward and ongoing consultation will be necessary to ensure all stakeholders continue to be involved with plans and subsequent actions that may impact on their lives. For example, the development of a Transport Plan to replace the current Joint Mid Wales Transport Plan will need wide ranging involvement of others to ensure it is integrated, preventative, and long term. The creation of the Strategic Development Plan will be informed by a number of formal consultation exercises at key stages of the plan. This will be a duty under Welsh Government legislation and guidance but is importantly a long-established way of working that is already embedded in the regions approach.

Assessment of Compliance

In order to ensure a consistent and rigorous approach to assessing the application of the 'Five Ways of Working' we will introduce an assessment template similar to that which has been used for the National Wellbeing Goals. This will be applied to each Wellbeing Objective as it progresses and develops into implementation. As the regions Wellbeing Objectives are at an early stage there is an opportunity to ensure rigorous compliance from the outset.



5.1 Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee Wellbeing Objectives

The following Well-being objectives will act as a guide for the direction and purpose of the region. They are strategic by nature and will be at the forefront of the regions collaborative work. They will need to be inter-linked in terms of mutual and cross cutting benefits. For example, transport is key to ensuring access to meaningful employment which in turn contributes to a vibrant economy. In a similar way, digital solutions will remove barriers to business location and flexible approaches to working, that benefit both employers and employees. Strategic Planning also has the potential to support local sustainable economic growth.

These interdependencies will need to be reflected in the way that progress is made and measured.

Well-being Objective 1

‘To improve the economic well-being of Mid Wales for future generations by narrowing the gap between key economic indicators such as wage rates and productivity relative to other parts of Wales and the UK and creating sustainable growth.’

The Mid Wales Growth Deal has been developed using the latest guidance and advice from both Welsh Government and UK Government and has been endorsed by both organisations. It is supported by an Economic Advisory Group which is made up of Business leaders from across the region.

The Growth Deal is designed to identify the most advantageous investment opportunities across a range of strategic priority areas. This work is complimented by each Council and the BBNP through a wide range of local economic development initiatives that will ensure sustainable growth for communities across the region. The Corporate Joint Committees Corporate Plan will focus on those things that will benefit from regional collaboration.

Detailed delivery plans are overseen and managed by a dedicated Programme Office whilst strategic oversight is provided by a Management Group which includes the Senior Responsible Officers (SRO’s) and Strategic Leads, with Welsh Government and UK Government observers in attendance.

Well-being Objective 2

‘To collaboratively and sustainably improve transport connectivity and infrastructure in Mid Wales to benefit the residents who live and work in the region, grow the economy and raise productivity.’

There have been some key investments in the region that will have a long-lasting impact on travel times and CO2 emissions including the Newtown By-pass and the Ddyfi Bridge improvement scheme. Although the Joint Mid Wales Transport Plan (JMWTP) identified a range of other such improvements it is recognised that Welsh Government now want to focus future investment on more sustainable forms of transport for both work and recreation. Guidance relating to the replacement of existing JMWTP was provided recently and the region will use this to undertake a complete review of current priorities against future needs.

The Corporate Joint Committee will focus on delivering the strategic improvements that can be made to the transport system in Mid Wales – those opportunities that are truly regional.



Wellbeing Objective 3

‘To provide consistent regional policies and guidance for Sustainable Development in Mid Wales that clearly set out our priorities for spatial growth.’

It is clear from the Welsh Government that there is a hierarchy of Development Plans that are linked to address national strategic policies and objectives. The ‘Future Wales’ plan sets out the Welsh Government’s framework for Planning Development across the Country, which followed by Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) Regional Development Plans (RDP’s) and Local Development Plans (LDP’s). Clearly there is a need for consistency with a golden thread running through all three levels of plan that will ensure policy alignment throughout the Planning system.

The introduction of an additional layer of Planning Policy into the planning system will require additional resources to deliver. Discussions are currently ongoing with Welsh Government and the CJC to identify the resources required, and once identified, the appointment of a delivery team with the necessary skills and knowledge will take place.

It will, however, take time to ensure, as with Local Development Plans, that the emerging Strategic Development Plan is compliant with guidance and planning law, and meets the needs of the region and local communities.



6.0 Alignment with National Goals –

The following section sets out how the region will align with Welsh Governments Well-Being goals.

▪ **A prosperous Wales**

The delivery of the Growth Deal over the next decade and beyond will help improve the economic health of the region by increasing the number of jobs, improving pay, and increasing investment. The Regional Transport Plan will help to identify improvements in the way that transport is planned and delivered that will increase access to work opportunities and ensure freight can be moved sustainably and the public have access to public transport. The Strategic Development Plan will help to identify opportunities for sustainable development on a regional basis that will feed into LDP's that will impact positively on the prosperity of local communities.

▪ **A resilient Wales**

The principles of the Well-Being Goals have already been used to underpin the development of projects within the Mid Wales Growth Deal and will continue to be used to drive a sustainable approach to economic development. A Regional Transport Plan for the region and the creation of a SDP will provide opportunity to align regional policy with national direction, with a particular focus on sustainability.

▪ **A Healthier Wales**

Improving the prosperity of the Mid Wales population will help improve Health benefits for communities. The correlation between increased prosperity and health is well evidenced through research. Accessible, sustainable transport is also key to enabling people to access health services and a healthy lifestyle. Planning policy which steers local decision making also has the capacity to impact positively on healthy lifestyles by ensuring sustainable developments with access to open space and facilities are co-located.

▪ **A More Equal Wales**

Expanding opportunities across the region to access jobs will help those who are currently excluded.

- **A Wales of Cohesive Communities**

Improvements to the economy of Mid Wales will help ensure inclusivity and resilience within communities, thus increasing cohesiveness.

- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language**

Increasing opportunities for economic activity, access to work and services, alongside an improved and a sustainable physical environment will help retain people in the region. This will in turn contribute to the strengthening of local culture and the Welsh Language.

- **A Globally Responsible Wales**

With sustainability and the environment at the heart of our plans for the economy, transport, and planning there will be increased alignment between national and local actions.

Corporate Wellbeing Objectives			
National Wellbeing Goals	WBO1	WB02	WB03
Prosperous	X	X	
Resilient	X	X	X
Healthier	X		X
More Equal	X	X	X
Cohesive			X
Culture		X	X
Global	X		

7.0 Action Plan

To progress the Vision and Objectives set out in this document an action plan has been agreed that will help ensure practical and timely progress. The action plan will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the plan is being enacted, and any changes to make the plan more effective are embedded. These action plans are intentionally strategic and high level in that more detailed plans will exist at operational level. These action plans are specifically intended to allow a strategic assessment as to whether progress is being made and if not, what needs to happen to address any shortcomings.

7.1 The Economy – Action Plan

Action	Timescale	Accountability
Develop an action plan for the delivery of the recently revised Growing Mid Wales Partnership - Strategic Economic Plan 2023.	To be agreed.	To be agreed.

7.2 Transport

Action	Timescale	Accountability
Assess Welsh Government guidelines on the production of a new regional transport plan from the point of receipt.	To be agreed.	To be agreed.
Using Welsh Government Guidelines, produce a draft work programme that is timebound from inception to completion.	To be agreed.	To be agreed.

7.3 Strategic Development Plan

Action	Timescale (financial year)	Accountability
Develop a Regional Working Group to progress preparatory work for the SDP	2023/2024	SDP Subgroup (complete)
Prepare and consult on a Delivery Agreement (DA) as detailed in the SDP manual (as yet unpublished)	Indicative 2024/2025	SDP Subgroup
Prepare an SDP in accordance with DA upon agreement at ministerial level	Indicative 2025 – 2030 - 5-year plan development period detailed in DA	SDP Subgroup

8.0 Regional Partners

In developing this Corporate Strategy careful consideration has been given to our regional partners. The term ‘regional’ in this instance is used to describe those organisations that already collaborate closely with the Local Authorities and National Park whose work impacts both directly and indirectly on the region’s services, specifically concerning the economy, transport and planning.

Partners include Local Health Boards, Local Service Boards, bordering Local Authorities in Wales and England, Welsh Government National Resources Wales and UK Government amongst others.

The Local Authorities in the Mid Wales Region are already involved in a number of other regional partnerships which include the Partnership Boards, and Public Service Boards. It will be important to consider the impact of an additional Partnership on existing commitments together with the need to share information with existing partners to avoid duplication and/or confusion. In addition, the capacity to manage and support multiple partnerships will need monitoring.

Engagement with an increased range of partners and stakeholders will take place during the consultation process in respect of this Corporate Plan whilst it is still in draft form. The final draft, which will be considered by the CJC in January 2024 of this year, will allow Members to consider the views of partners as well as the wider public and make any necessary changes before the plan is ratified.

In addition, as the work of the CJC is still at an early stage, both this Plan and associated CJC work will evolve over time, and ongoing engagement will be key to make sure the corporate plan is representative of the regions priorities as it matures.

9.0 Public Sector Duties

The CJC as a public body will need to ensure it fulfils its public sector duties in the same way that the constituent bodies already do. In particular, the CJC will need to be explicit as to how it is going to meet its responsibilities in respect of the following:

- **Promote and conduct sustainable development.**
- **Promote the Welsh Language.**
- **Enable greater diversity and equality.**
- **Reduce the inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage.**
- **Seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity.**

The Mid Wales CJC has only recently been formed and there is still work to do to set out explicitly what is needed to fulfil these duties. As the constituent bodies are already undertaking this work there will be an understanding of what is required to ensure that these duties are fully met. This will ensure that as a minimum the CJC's intent is to meet these duties and over time exceed the statutory requirements. Reference has also been made throughout this strategy to many of the duties that need to be fulfilled. In addition, a detailed Impact Assessment has been undertaken to ensure the plan currently complies with a broad range of Welsh Government policies.

As has been identified, more still needs to be done and the CJC will set out in detail plans to ensure full compliance within the next 12 months. This will include a Biodiversity Duty Plan for the remaining period of the plan.



Welsh Government Strategies and Policies

In formulating this Plan, account has been taken of Welsh Government Strategies and Policies to ensure consistency and alignment with National and Regional plans. Some of the main Welsh Government strategies are referenced here. This is not an exhaustive list, but efforts have been made to consider the relevance of wider Welsh Government Strategy and Policy, the source of which may not be specifically referenced here.

It is important, however, that this document focuses on what, how, and when the Region will address strategic challenges for the economy, planning and transport and does not just mirror Welsh Government policy. The following sections set out the key Welsh Government strategies that have been used to develop this plan.

Future Wales – National Plan 2040

The structure of the Welsh Planning System

The Welsh Planning System is development plan led with an expectation that Plans will be developed on a national, regional and local basis. These three tiers will comprise ‘the development plan.’

The Welsh Governments ‘Future Wales’ document states that the National tier of the Development Plan process will be the highest tier. Strategic Development Plans will cover regional and sub regional scale, and Local Development Plans will consider local development policy.

The requirement is that the three tiers of the development plan will align and complement each other. ‘Future Wales’ will need to be reflected in the development of second and third tier plans conforming with guidance. Decisions flowing from the Strategic Development Plan process will need to align and accord with ‘Future Wales’ as will Local Development Plans.

The development of the Welsh Planning system is predicated on the spatial planning principle. In essence WG strategy and policy is not intended to determine local planning decisions but provide guidance, context, policies, and a framework within which more local decisions are taken.

Llwybr Newydd – Transport Strategy 2021

Welsh Government Vision

‘An Accessible, Sustainable and Efficient Transport System.’

Llwybr Newydd – or new path in Welsh – is Welsh Governments new transport strategy. It sets out the vision for how the Welsh transport system

can deliver Government priorities, helping to put the Country on a pathway to creating a more prosperous, green and equal society.

Using the five ways of working set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the strategy has extensively engaged with transport users, service providers and key partners to co-produce this new direction of travel. As well as setting out short-term priorities and long-term ambitions, it has developed nine mini plans explaining how Welsh Government will deliver them for different transport modes and sectors.

Llwybr Newydd is also supported by a more detailed Mobility in Wales report, the Transport Data and Trends report, and an Integrated Sustainability Appraisal. It will require governments, local authorities, transport providers (both commercial and third sector) and colleagues in other policy areas to work together to help ensure that transport contributes to the current and future well-being of Wales; to set Wales on a new path.

The Vision is further explained for clarity purposes as follows: -

‘Accessible’ - this means a system that meets the relevant policy and regulatory standards on equality, access, human rights, and the Welsh language, and aims to remove the physical, attitudinal, environmental, systemic, linguistic and economic barriers that prevent people from using sustainable transport services and infrastructure.

‘Sustainable’ - means a transport system that meets the needs of the present whilst protecting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. ‘

‘Efficient’ - means a transport system that gets people where they want to go, when they want to go there, making best use of resources.

‘Transport system’ - means transport infrastructure (such as footpaths, cycle paths, roads and rail as well as the many other structures and systems that support them including digital infrastructure) and transport services (such as bus and rail, taxis, aviation and maritime transport). The wider system encompasses commercial and third sector transport providers. It also includes governance – the legislation, regulation and policies that govern transport.

The Strategy sets out three priorities: -

Priority 1

- **Bring services to people to reduce the need to travel.**

We will plan for better physical and digital connectivity, more local services, more home and remote working and more active travel, to reduce the need for people to use their cars daily.

Priority 2

- **Allow people and goods to move easily from door to door by accessible, sustainable and efficient transport services and infrastructure.**

We will actively aim to achieve a shift away from private car use to more sustainable transport modes for most journeys.

We will invest in low-carbon, accessible, efficient and sustainable transport services and infrastructure that enable more people to walk, cycle and use public transport, and low-emissions vehicles.

Infrastructure - We will provide safe, accessible, well-maintained and managed transport infrastructure.

We will also future proof it to adapt to climate change and facilitate more sustainable transport choices.

Where we need new transport infrastructure, we will use the Sustainable Transport Hierarchy to guide decisions.

We will continue to make best use of existing transport infrastructure by maintaining and managing it well.

We will also adapt it to a changing climate and upgrade it to support modal shift.

Where we need new infrastructure, we will use the:

-Sustainable Transport Hierarchy

1 Walking and Cycling 2 Public Transport 3 Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicles 4 Other Private Motor Vehicles

Priority 3

- **Encourage people to make the change to more sustainable transport.**

We will encourage people to change their travel behaviour to use low-carbon, sustainable transport.

We will do this by making sustainable transport more attractive and more affordable, and by adopting innovations that make it easier to use.

Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act is about improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales.

It will make the public bodies listed in the act think more about the long term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

This will help us to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future.

To make sure we are all working towards the same vision, the act puts in place 7 well-being goals.

Well-being goals

- **A prosperous Wales**
- **A resilient Wales**
- **A healthier Wales**
- **A more equal Wales**
- **A Wales of cohesive communities**
- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language**
- **A globally responsible Wales**



Why do we need this law?

Wales faces a number of challenges now and in the future, such as climate change, poverty, health inequalities, jobs, and growth. To tackle these, we need to work together. To give current and future generations a good quality of life we need to think about the long-term impact of the decisions we make. This law will make sure that our public sector does this.

How does it work?

Sustainable development

Sustainable development is about improving the way that we can achieve our economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being. The act starts by giving a definition of what we mean by sustainable development.

In this Act “sustainable development” means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by acting, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals.

Part 2 ‘improving well-being’ section 2 ‘sustainable development’.

For Wales to be sustainable it is important that we improve all 4 aspects of our well-being. Each is as important as the others.

Well-being duty

The act places a duty that the public bodies will be expected to conduct. A duty means they must do this by law. The well-being duty states:

Each public body must conduct sustainable development.

The action a public body takes in conducting sustainable development must include:

1. setting and publishing objectives (“well-being objectives”) that are designed to maximise its contribution to achieving each of the well-being goals, and
2. taking all reasonable steps (in exercising its functions) to meet those objectives.

Part 2 ‘Improving Well-being section 3 ‘well-being duty on public bodies’ paragraphs (1) and (2).

This means that each public body listed in the act must work to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. To do this they must set and publish well-being objectives.

These objectives will show how each public body will work to achieve the vision for Wales set out in the well-being goals. Public bodies must then take action to make sure they meet the objectives they set.

Which public bodies does the act include?

- Welsh Ministers
- **Local authorities**
- Local health boards
 - Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
 - Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
 - Cardiff & Vale University Health Board
 - Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
 - Hywel Dda University Health Board
 - Powys Teaching Health Board
 - Swansea Bay University Health Board
- Public Health Wales NHS Trust
- Velindre NHS Trust
- National Park Authorities
 - Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority
 - Snowdonia National Park Authority
 - Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
- Fire and rescue authorities
 - North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
 - South Wales Fire and Rescue Service
 - Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service
- Natural Resources Wales
- The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
- The Arts Council of Wales
- Sports Council of Wales
- National Library of Wales
- National Museum of Wales.

Well-being goals

The 7 well-being goals ('the goals') show the kind of Wales we want to see. Together they provide a shared vision for the public bodies listed in the act to work towards.

They are a set of goals; the act makes it clear the listed public bodies must work to achieve all the goals, not just one or two.

1. A prosperous Wales

An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.

2. A resilient Wales

A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example, climate change).

3. A healthier Wales

A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.

4. A More Equal Wales

A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances).

5. A Wales of cohesive communities

Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.

6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.

7. A globally responsible Wales

A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.

Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and Biodiversity Duty

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (the Act) introduced an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (the section 6 or s6 duty) for public authorities (PAs) in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales.

The s6 duty requires that public authorities ‘must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity as far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems’. To comply with the S6 duty, public authorities should embed the consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems into their early thinking and business planning, including any policies, plans, programmes, and projects, as well as their day-to-day activities.

Under section 6(7) of the Act all public authorities must, before the end of 2019 and before the end of every third year after 2019, publish a report on what they have done to comply with the s6 duty. Given the Mid Wales CJC has only been in existence since early 2022 the duty is yet to be fulfilled.

The Mid Wales CJC has not attempted to set out a detailed plan in this first iteration of our Corporate Plan, given that detailed work is yet to commence in the areas of economy, transport, and strategic development planning.

The opportunity, however, has been taken to set out our commitment to the Duty and our intent to fulfil all its requirements as detailed work is undertaken.

Mid Wales Commitment to Biodiversity

‘The Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee is committed to fulfilling all duties contained within the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and more specifically the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty as work progresses with the areas of Economy, Transport and Strategic Planning Development.

These areas of work are currently at an early stage and any attempt to fulfil these requirements at the current time would lack sufficient detail to meet the duty in any meaningful way.

‘Our commitment extends to ensuring that we will make a significant, material and beneficial difference to the environment and biodiversity for the region.’

Governance Administration and Resources

The Corporate Joint Committee is established under statutory Welsh Government legislation and as such it is important that the governance arrangements reflect these legislative requirements. In addition, these requirements need to be proportionate, transparent, and accessible.

This section of the Plan sets out the administrative arrangements that have been put in place to ensure appropriate governance and administration of the CJC for Mid Wales. The adoption of these arrangements is reported through a democratic process reflecting long established good practice for decision making and public transparency.

Background

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (“the LGE Act”) created the framework for a consistent mechanism for regional collaboration between local authorities through Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs). The LGE Act provides for the establishment of CJCs through Regulations (CJC Establishment Regulations).

The CJC will exercise functions in three areas namely strategic development planning, regional transport planning and the promotion of the economic well-being of their areas. In contrast to other joint committee arrangements, CJCs are separate corporate bodies which can employ staff, hold assets and budgets, and undertake functions.

The Mid Wales CJC will comprise of the Leaders of Powys County Council and Ceredigion County Council (“the Constituent Councils”) and in the preparation of the Strategic Development Plan, the CJC will include a representative of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park.

The CJC has prescribed functions related to the preparation of the Regional Transport Plan, Strategic Development Plan, and the exercise of Economic Wellbeing powers. These are set out specifically as follows:

- (a) **Economic well-being** (section 76 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021)
- (b) **Transport policies** (section 108(1)(a) and (2)(a) of Part 2 of the Transport Act 2000)
- (c) **Strategic development plan**

The CJC should be treated as a member of the ‘local government family’ and, where appropriate, should be subject to the same powers and duties as local authorities in the way that they operate. This includes the Sustainable Development and Well-being Duty under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (“the WFG Act”), the Environment Act 1995 and the duty to prepare and publish a strategy for

contributing to the eradication of child poverty in Wales under the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

CJCs are required to appoint a number of statutory “executive officers” like the roles within principal councils (e.g., Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer).

The current postholders as agreed by the CJC on the are: -

Chief Executive – (This role will be rotated annually between the two constituent Councils)

Chief Finance Officer – Ceredigion Council lead authority

Monitoring Officer – Powys County Council lead authority

CJCs can directly employ such officers but it is also possible for staff to be loaned from a Constituent Council to fulfil these roles as the CJC may determine. It is also intended that all executive roles within a CJC will be afforded the same statutory protection and indemnity as statutory officers within principal councils.

An agreement will be entered into between the CJC and the authorities for staff to be made available to the CJC and will be acting as CJC staff when conducting functions for the CJC. The members of staff that are affected will be consulted to ensure to seek their agreement to these additional obligations.

Support Services

The support services provided will be on an ad-hoc basis as and when support is required and will be conducted by staff within their normal contracted hours with their Constituent Councils, and Chief Executives of each Authority will keep such matters under review to address workload pressures.

Standing Orders

Standing Orders have been agreed at the meeting of the CJC on the 25th January 2022 and are accessible through the link for CJC Committee and Agendas.

Constitution

A Constitution has also been agreed by the CJC on the 25th of January 2022 and are accessible through the link for CJC Committee and Agendas.

There are already 3 sets of governance Regulations in force. In addition to the establishing of regulations, there are 2 sets of General Regulations with a third anticipated to come into force in the Spring of 2023. It is likely that there will be a further set.

It can be appreciated therefore that establishing the governance arrangements for the CJC has to respond and develop against a legal situation which is still evolving.

An Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee has been established to monitor the work of the CJC. Similarly, the arrangements for the Code of Conduct and Standards Committee are to be confirmed. These are in italics in the Standing Orders on the assumption that the arrangements will reflect the consultation, but this has not been confirmed.

The members of the CJC are:

- (a) the executive leaders of a. Powys County Council b. Ceredigion County Council
- (b) A member of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority

The CJC members are entitled to vote in relation to any matter to be decided by the CJC, except that the Bannau Brycheiniog member may only vote where the matter to be decided is about strategic planning functions (and associated issues).

To implement the legislative requirements, it is proposed that the CJC will have three Sub Committees, with the chair and vice chair of each Sub-Committee being drawn from the respective Cabinets of the Constituent Councils (or their nominated deputies) and shared between the two authorities for a 12-month period. It is proposed that the following sub-committees be established: -

- Regional Transport Planning Sub Committee
- Economic Well Being – Regional Economic Development
- Strategic Development Planning Sub Committee

The CJC is required to establish a sub-committee to be known as the Governance and Audit Sub-Committee with the terms of reference being approved by the CJC before 1st June 2022.

The CJC will appoint a Standards Committee in accordance with the terms of reference adopted by the CJC.

Collaborating with its Constituent Councils and the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee (“CJC”) will be required to put in place appropriate overview and scrutiny arrangements. Scrutiny will be an important part of the democratic accountability of the CJC. It will be important for CJCs to consult on and agree the arrangements with its constituent councils.

In considering the most effective and efficient approach to scrutiny, Welsh Government require Constituent Councils and CJCs to give thought to the benefits of a joint overview and scrutiny committee made up of the constituent councils together with the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority in respect of Strategic Development Planning matters. The clear aim and ambition however must be to create, facilitate and encourage a clear democratic link back to the constituent councils.

Future reports will be brought back to the CJC to appoint representatives to this Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

The CJC met in January 2023 to establish its budget for the 2023/2024 financial year.

Financial Impacts

The financial impacts of adopting this Constitution and associated documents will be incorporated into the budget for 2023/2024 and future reports to the CJC.

Equality Act

The CJC is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socioeconomic 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 socioeconomic 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.
- As part of the Equality Act the region will meet its statutory duty by adopting existing Strategic Equality Plans (SEP's) that form part of each lead authorities own Corporate Plans.

Sustainable Development

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

Although an Integrated Impact Assessment will be required as the work of the CJC develops this has not been undertaken to date. It is, however, an integral part of this Corporate Plan and the Integrated Assessment.

Workforce Impacts

Part 5 of the LGE Act provides for the establishment, through regulations, of CJsCs and compliance will be had with this and other legislative obligations in the establishment of CJsCs. In particular, the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee Regulations came into force on 1st April 2021 and set out an initial framework for example, that the CJC should be established and the time limits for the discharging of specific functions. However, a series of further Regulations are being drafted and consulted on by Welsh Government. The Welsh Government has concluded its consultation on the Corporate Joint Committees (General) (No.2) (Wales) Regulations 2021. The Welsh Government is also currently consulting on draft statutory guidance.

Risk Management Impacts

Failure to constitute the CJC means the CJC will be unable to take any decisions, including setting a budget and accordingly would be in breach of the legal requirements imposed under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (exposing each constituent council and national park authority to challenge) along with the reputational risks that such non-compliance will bring.

Resources

Although Welsh Government have provided funding for the setting up of the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee, it is a requirement that the local authority member organisations fund an annual budget to resource ongoing work.

Budget 2023/24

The Budget for 2023/24 is included. The budget proposed totals £175,000 consisting of £131,255 for the General Budget and £43,745 for the Strategic Development Plan Budget. Powys County Council and Ceredigion County Council will fund the budget equally. The basis for funding the MWCJC budget will be reviewed and agreed annually.

The Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority fund 11.45% (per national park population projections – 2018 based – published May 2021) of the Strategic Development Plan Budget. The 2023/24 Budget remains predicated on limited expenditure being incurred. This is in part due to number of matters needing resolution with Welsh Government. There are also key areas where further clarification is required before financial implications and timelines can be fully understood e.g., Welsh Government Regional Transport Plan guidance. In addition, at this stage no formal decision has been made regarding the Growing Mid Wales Joint Committee, which currently sits outside of the MWCJC.

Therefore, as several factors become clearer, there may need to be a formal revision of the 23/24 MWCJC budget.

Other Financial Matters

- A. Surpluses that accrue in any year will be contained in the Strategic Planning and General Budgets identified separately within the MWCJC reserve account and will be used for future expenditure.
- B. All costs incurred and charged to MWCJC (being a separate legal entity) will need to be appropriately evidenced. This is to ensure value for money relative to the level of activity, outputs and number of MWCJC meetings taking place.
- C. Audit Wales will also at the right time formally need to certify the year end outturn position for 2022/23. When MWCJC expenditure falls under £2.5m in any given year, then this is via an annual return. It is worth noting that beyond this threshold a fuller Statement of Accounts would be required, which would be a step up in terms of resources required.
- D. The MWCJC does not have any liabilities outstanding in respect of any earlier financial year as a result it is not currently recommended that an amount is approved to be held for this purpose.
- E. Budgets for the MWCJC will be reviewed on an annual basis to reflect the growing work programme and to ensure the resourcing of specific work areas.

Equalities – Integrated Impact Assessment and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

Councils within the region have already identified the importance of equalities as part of their own Corporate Plans. This drive to improve equality of opportunity is therefore shared across the region and is a core principle to this corporate plan and the joint way of working.

The statutory regulation that embeds the need to address inequalities is contained within the Equality Act 2010. More specifically CJC's are listed in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and are clearly a duty that local authorities, and in this case CJC's, must embrace. This duty is regulated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

The use of Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA's) is now customary practice for public sector organisations and helps to assess how their plans may impact on disadvantaged, deprived and vulnerable groups and individuals. It is also important that initiative-taking steps are taken to improve the life chances of such groups and individuals, and in doing so there needs to be an aspirational approach to address inequality that goes beyond any statutory requirements. The Mid Wales Region will adopt an Integrated Impact Assessment process that ensures statutory compliance but has also set out an overriding equality statement which will guide a number of equality objectives that form part of this plan.

Rather than create a new IIA process for the region it has been decided to adopt the format used by Powys County Council. This process has been developed over many years and has proved effective in assessing compliance with national guidance.

In addition, the Mid Wales CJC is legally required to produce a Strategic Equality Plan (SEP). Both lead authorities have already met this duty by ensuring that the individual Council Corporate Plans include SEP's for their own areas. It has been agreed with the Equality and Human Rights Commission that the inclusion of these existing plans as a part of this Corporate Strategy, will meet compliance with the obligations under the Equality Act and, in particular, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). An Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee will be appointed to monitor progress of the CJC in this, and all other areas, as described in the governance section of this plan.

Powys County Council Impact Assessment (AI)

The work undertaken in relation to the areas of Economy, Transport and Strategic Planning will have potential impacts on our communities in respect of equalities. It is essential that at each stage of the process we undertake ongoing impact assessments as to how this work will impact on our communities. We are therefore confident that as each area of work will need to undertake its own detailed Integrated Impact Assessment we will meet and exceed out statutory duty.

As an overarching guiding principle, we have set out our vision, together with our objectives, that will be used ensure equalities are at the forefront of our work.

Vision for the Mid Wales Regional Corporate Joint Committee - Equalities

'The Mid Wales Region will prioritise work to improve opportunities for those who experience inequality and socio-economic disadvantage at the heart of what we do.'

Objectives

1. We will work to improve opportunities that residents in the region have access to well paid jobs including those who are socio-economically disadvantaged.
2. We will work to create an integrated transport system that improves opportunities to access work and recreation including those who are disadvantaged through inequality.
3. We will work to ensure that Strategic Development Plan policy and guidance provides improved opportunities for disadvantaged groups and individuals.

Measurement and Assessment

We will use the Integrated Impact Assessment process as set out by Welsh Government to measure how we are progressing with the equality objectives set out above. This assessment will be undertaken in tandem with the IIA we will undertake for the CJC wellbeing objectives that are also set out in this plan.

Sustainability

Sustainability is at the heart of what public sector organisations need to do to ensure future generations can live their lives in a healthy and fulfilling way. In a more concise way, sustainability means that we must strive to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability is defined by Welsh Government as a process of improving the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales.

The Welsh Governments Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 introduced the sustainable development principles in the 5 Ways of Working that all public bodies must adopt. It is a duty that is placed on public sector bodies across Wales. Councils within the region already operate in accordance with these principles in their own Corporate Plans and will continue to adopt an approach throughout this plan that reflects the principles both in the way they are delivered and measured.

Given the more strategic nature of the work of CJC's it is likely that the impact of our work will be spread over a longer period. It is important that we monitor closely how the development of plans, and the delivery of investment decisions, impacts on the sustainability of our communities for the long term.

Five Ways of Working Principles

1. Long term

The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.

2. Prevention

How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.

3. Integration

Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.

4. Collaboration

Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.

5. Involvement

The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

Performance Management and Quality Assurance

Measuring progress with our plans is critical if we are to demonstrate commitment and accountability for actions identified.

To this end we will use the Powys County Council Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework to assess how well the CJC is delivering on the plan. The principles of Plan–Do–Review, which are the basis for the Framework will be used to make sure progress is assessed, monitored and transparent.

The region also has a duty to meet a range of Welsh Government legislative requirements that have already been set out in this document. For example, meeting our Wellbeing Objectives will be key to demonstrating that the CJC is meeting its commitment to the Act.

Annual Report

The Corporate Joint Committee will produce an annual report that sets out our achievements in terms of how progress has been made in the areas of Economy, Transport and Strategic Planning. In addition, this annual report will set out how we have met our legislative requirements to Welsh Government.

Scrutiny and Audit

The CJC will be scrutinised and audited in accordance with the constitution which is attached as appendix. The work of the oversight sub committees will be partly governed by the statutory guidance contained within a range of Welsh Government strategies and policies.

The following paragraphs set out the purpose and role of both the Governance and Audit Sub Committee, and the Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee.

The Corporate Joint Committee, as set out in the constitution, will be scrutinised by both the Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee, and the Governance and Audit Sub Committee.

Governance and Audit Sub-Committee

The CJC will establish a sub-committee (known as the Governance and Audit Sub-Committee) to:

- a. Review and scrutinise the CJC's financial affairs.
- b. Make reports and recommendations in relation to the CJC's financial affairs.
- c. Review and assess the risk management, internal control, and corporate governance arrangements of the CJC.
- d. Make reports and recommendations to the CJC on the adequacy and effectiveness of those arrangements.
- e. Oversee the CJC's internal and external audit arrangements.
- f. Review any financial statements prepared by the CJC.
- g. Exercise such other functions as the CJC may specify.

Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The CJC have established an Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee in accordance with the terms of reference adopted by the CJC The purpose of the Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee shall be:

Performing the overview and scrutiny function for the CJC on behalf of the Constituent Councils and the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority where appropriate to:

- (a) review and or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any of the CJC's functions.

(b) make reports or recommendations to the CJC or its executive officers with respect to the discharge of any of those functions.

(c) exercise such other functions as the CJC may determine.

(d) To develop a Forward Work Programme annually, reflecting the functions described.

(e) To seek reassurance and consider if the CJC is developing according to guidance from WG.



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