

MID WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE

Strategic Planning Sub-Committee

16th February 2022

Report Title: Discussion of resource requirements for preparatory work in advance of a Mid Wales Strategic Development Plan (SDP)

Purpose of Report	To discuss resource requirements for enabling preparatory work on a Mid Wales SDP
Decision Sought: It is recommended that Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree a lead authority for progression of baseline work for the SDP.• Consider resources to provide dedicated SDP support.	
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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 a Mid Wales CJCs through Regulations and at its inaugural meeting on 25th January 2022, the CJC was established, approved a budget for 2022/23 and approved Standing Orders which are to be replaced by a formal Constitution in due course.
- The three main statutory duties of the CJC are to prepare a regional Strategic Development Plan (SDP), a Regional Transport Plan (RTP) and an Economic Wellbeing Plan. It is the intention of Welsh Government guidance that these duties should be undertaken in parallel and complement one another.
- The purpose of this report is for the Sub-Committee to discuss and consider how resources can be provided to progress SDP work. In this context, and as one of the actions of the last meeting, the Chair of the Sub-Committee has written to the relevant Welsh Government Minister to seek funding support to facilitate the preparation of the SDP. A response was received from the Minister on the 7th February 2023 who advised that “the cost of preparing SDPs should be met from within Local Authority budgets”.

At the last meeting of the SDP sub-group, the preferred option was option 2 to progress the SDP. Therefore, it is necessary for the Sub-Committee to consider how to secure resources to progress this option.

The resources required are to formulate initial preparatory work – to inform what has to be done by whom and the resources put in place in advance of submitting a formal delivery agreement. This is required in advance of preparing a formal delivery agreement in order to establish resource requirements, evidence base requirements and the necessary consultation arrangements in accordance with the SDP regulations and draft manual.

The following sections outlines the purpose of the work and the options that are available in resourcing this work:

The requirement and constraints

- In order to progress an SDP regionally a dedicated resource is essential to progressing work. There are a number of questions and outstanding issues that need ironing out before the Strategic Planning Sub-Committee would be in a position to prepare a Delivery Agreement (DA) (the legal timetable that holds the plan to account). These center on governance and collaborative working approaches as well as mapping out a regional skills audit. Work around matching up LDP stages and potential time lines incorporating key stages of the Regional Transport Plan (RTP) and Economic Wellbeing plan and gathering of baseline data will also require resources.
- It is proposed to facilitate this pre-DA work, one authority is identified as taking the interim regional lead thus meeting the expectations of Welsh Government following the SDP RTP meeting in January 2023 and resource is identified to provide dedicated support to steer the work streams and prepare the relevant papers and report and prepare a DA reflecting the capacity and key stages of LDP and other CJC plans.
- There are significant resource constraints across the 3 partners planning policy teams at present. Brecon Beacons National Park are constrained being a part of 3 CJCs and subsequently 3 SDPs - and their resources are presently tied up with developing the National Park Plan. Powys County Council are beginning work on their replacement Local Development Plan (rLDP), and are at present developing their preferred strategy stage and need to focus on the rLDP in order to ensure plan coverage before their drop-dead date. The Ceredigion policy team are not in plan preparation stage and have no drop-dead date. However, the policy team have been re-deployed to other services to support recruitment issues elsewhere. Subject to reducing this service support they currently have some capacity to act as interim regional lead for the SDP. It is therefore proposed that Ceredigion collaboratively work with SDP partners to lead work on the formative stages of SDP preparation - centered on timetabling and identifying resource requirements with the assistance of a dedicated SDP resource.
- An officer led SDP working group has been established for the region and this would act as the mechanism by which information is gathered and shared for the lead authority and SDP officer/ resource; with the CJC SDP sub group being the reporting and decision-making structure for the work streams.

Purpose:

- To scope out delivery model options (staffing requirements, ICT requirements,

- evidence requirements).
- To prepare an indicative SDP budget.
- To prepare a skeleton Delivery Agreement timetable

Staff Resource Options to undertake Initial Preparatory Work

- Appoint consultant – estimated cost required
- Allocate staff from one or more of the constituent Authorities
- New position established
- Undertake work with another region

Option	Timescale	Estimated Budget	Implications	Summary
Allocate staff from one or more of the constituent Authorities			None of the constituent authorities has capacity	Not realistic with current workloads and resources available
Consultant	Tbd – subject to budget and procurement	£100,000	Budget allocation would need to be secured and agreed between constituent authorities Procurement process needs to be established	Costly
Create new position / positions (Strategic / planner)	3-month lead in	Tbd based on JE	JD, PS to be written, Who's responsible for recruitment / employing staff? Constituent authority or CJC	Can be progressed relatively quickly

Collaborate with another SDP region	Tbd	Share of salary charged	Capacity to be established	May take time to organise, lead area may be priority
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Recommendation to the Strategic Planning Committee

- A) To discuss and identify a lead authority for the preparatory work of SDP preparation and the preferred resource option for undertaking initial preparatory work on the Mid Wales SDP process.
- B) To report the preferred option to the CJC for consideration.