

## MID WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE

17<sup>th</sup> October 2023

### REPORT TO THE SDP SUB GROUP

**Report Title: Confirmation of how the allocation of resources to progress the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) will be utilised**

<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To update on the use of the allocated resources to the SDP
<b>Decision Sought:</b>  <b>It is recommended that Members:</b>  1. Note and agree the suggested route forward.	
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<b>Finance Officer</b>	Duncan Hall (Section 151 Officer)
<b>Legal Officer</b>	Clive Pinney (Monitoring Officer)

#### Background:

1. 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 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022, the CJC was established, approved a budget for 2022/23 and approved Standing Orders which were to be replaced by a formal Constitution in due course.
2. The 3 main workstreams 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 the guidance that these three work streams should be undertaken in parallel and complement one another.
3. The purpose of this report is for the SDP sub-group to understand how resources will be directed to the SDP pre-preparatory work. Following the report of the last SDP subgroup where resource requirements and the varying landscape of LDP2’s across the region the following recommendations were put to the CJC board:

#### Strategic Development Planning (SDP)

- CJC to seek clarification on the legal position of the region moving to SDP work, leaving Powys in a ‘no plan’ period.
- CJC to support the resource requirements of pre-preparatory work in establishing the SDP and developing the Delivery Agreement.

4. As a result of these recommendations being approved the following actions have been agreed:
  - A letter was drafted for Julie James MS (attached as appendix 1)
  - Discussions over how best to utilise the resources approved were conducted internally and a way forward agreed which is outlined below.

### **The requirement and constraints**

5. To progress an SDP regionally it is felt that a dedicated resource is essential to progressing work. There are several questions and outstanding issues that need ironing out before the SDP subgroup 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 timelines incorporating key stages of the Regional Transport Plan (RTP) and Economic Wellbeing plan and gathering of baseline data will also require resources.
6. Resources of circa 35k were identified for this financial year (2023/2024). This would not support the employment of a full-time officer; thus, further options are available: Commission external support in the form of consultancy, however it was not considered this would be the best use of resources as it would take a consultant a fair while to get to speed with the regional requirements and ultimately, it's not a compact piece of work. It would also require a 'sell to Wales' procurement exercise which can take several months.
7. We could recruit for a part time role which with experience would likely not be a successful campaign given recruitment difficulties regionally and again could take several months.
8. Undertake an internal secondment opportunity with existing staff who have experience of the issues and the required outputs.
9. Option 3 was determined as the most expedient and likely to deliver the best results. Discussions were had internally as to suitable candidates, and it was agreed that given work flows in Powys these would be best placed coming from the Ceredigion team whose LDP2 is on formal pause.
10. Thus, the following approach was agreed as the best way forward, and that would be for a temporary period until the end of financial year redistribute work internally in the Ceredigion policy team to provide 0.5 FTE dedicated to SDP work.
11. The manager of the Ceredigion policy team has considered the internal skill set of the team and would advise that Connor Cook (Planning Policy Officer) is up to speed on the SDP regulations and manual and the requisite policy knowledge to determine the timetable and work streams. Alongside this Catrin Cond (Senior Planning policy Officer) has a detailed knowledge of the plan preparation process and coordination, as well as costings and IT requirements and thus between them they would make an effective team to undertake this pre-preparatory work at both officer and Senior Officer level.

12. By sharing the resource in this manner, it would not result in the loss of anyone individual staff member from the team on a substantial basis and their skill sets complement each other and they would be able to ensure cover and a back stop for one another in report preparation. The SDP lead for the region Dr Sarah Groves-Phillips would then support them in preparing relevant documentation and sense checking the work programming as well as presenting to sub-groups and board etc.
13. It is the view of the LPA that a re-organisation of internal priorities would not warrant formal secondments as similar workflows been undertaken several times in the past across service areas. It is proposed that Catrin Cond is allocated at grade 12, 1 day SDP work per week and Connor cook is allocated at Grade 10, 1.5 days per week to the SDP. This coincides with the addition of a planning policy officer post already planned for the in team who could pick up any workstreams these officers would be required to drop.
14. The utilisation of the resources available would deliver the following outcomes:
  - Internal Requirements**
  - Timeline for SDP (including matching with other regional plans and Powys LDP2)
  - Mapped reporting structure for (member, officer engagement) below SDP sub-group level.
  - Establishment of SDP officers / member working groups – either regional or LPA/ NPA specific or both as advised.
  - Skills mapping regionally.
  - Complete SDP regs/ manual requirements list
  - Resource Requirements for SDP (staffing / consultancy)
  - Consideration of IT requirements across the region
  - Draft Budget for SDP
  - Statutory Requirements**
  - Draft Delivery Agreement
  - Draft Community Involvement Scheme

### **Financial Impacts:**

15. The financial implications have been accounted for in the CJC decision identifying a resource allocation

### **Integrated Impact Assessment:**

16. The CJC is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
  - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - Foster good relations between people who share a protected

characteristic and those who do not.

- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
- Treat the Welsh language no less favorably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

17. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals.
18. The allocation of resources for an SDP officer would support the CJC in exercising its functions listed under the legislation above. The allocation of resources to such a role does not in itself require an integrated impact assessment as it is not forming policy.

#### **Workforce Impacts:**

19. The informal secondment of two members of the Ceredigion policy team to the SDP would allow for work to progress without the requisite recruitment lag or need to tender on sell to Wales. The workforce impacts internally will be ameliorated by the upgrading of an assistant role to officer which was pre-planned. Furthermore, a number of existing workstreams in the policy team will be closing out shortly allowing for more time to be dedicated to the SDP.

#### **Legal Impacts:**

20. None recognised at this time

#### **Risk Management Impacts:**

21. Failure to direct resources towards an SDP given the limited capacity and resources of existing policy teams in the region will likely result in the stalling of work on the SDP and therefore the duty of the CJC to undertake an SDP will be on-hold for the foreseeable future.

#### **Consultation:**

22. There is no requirement for consultation in respect of this report.

#### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

23. To ensure appropriate resources are in place for the CJC to make progress on preparing an SDP and thus complying with its statutory duties.

#### **Implementation of Decision:**

24. This decision is proposed for immediate implementation

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1 Letter to Julie James MS seeking clarity on LDP position.