



MID WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE

Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee

Date of Meeting – 16th November 2023

Purpose of Report	To provide the inaugural meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee with an update report from the Senior Responsible Officer's for the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee
Decision Sought:	To note the content of the report.
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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 Overview and Scrutiny 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.
- 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

4. Progress Update

4.1 Meetings

The MWCJC has been meeting on a quarterly basis since its 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 Sub Committee has met three times, and the Regional Transport Planning sub committee has recently held its inaugural meeting. The Economic Wellbeing Sub Committee is due hold its first meeting in November 2023 where the strategic direction of delivery for this sub committee will be discussed and agreed.

The Standards Sub Committee is yet to meet and is required to meet on an annual basis with the Governance and Audit Sub Committee will hold its first meeting in January 2024 and is required to meet on a quarterly basis as is this Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

4.2 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 31st October 2024 and a Strategic Development Plan Delivery Agreement by 31st March 2024. 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. Therefore, an implementation plan together with costings has been submitted to Welsh Government to enable delivery of the Regional Transport Plan and as there is no funding available for delivery of the Strategic Development Plan contributions are going to be made to the CJC from Powys and Ceredigion County Councils and Bannau Brycheiniog.

4.3 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 2022/23 was approved on the 10th of January 2022. The General Budget totalled £120,000 and the Strategic Planning Budget totalled £40,000. The expenditure on the General Budget was £61,342 which resulted in an underspend of £58,658 which has been transferred into an earmarked reserve. The expenditure on the Strategic Planning Budget was £15,334 which resulted in an underspend of £24,666 which has been transferred into a specific earmarked reserve. The main reason for the underspends was the concerns regarding the MWCJC's ability to reclaim VAT – this was resolved successfully towards the end of the financial year.

The Annual Return has been completed and sent to Audit Wales for them to audit. When the audit is complete the MWCJC will be asked to approve the return.

The MWCJC Budget for 2023/24 was approved on the 19 January 2023. The General Budget totals £131,255 and the Strategic Planning budget totals £43,745.

At the CJC meeting in July 2023 the budget position was reviewed. The proposed amended budget requirement for the general budget increased from £131,255 to £146,255 – with the additional £15,000 being funded from earmarked reserves. The proposed amended budget requirement for the strategic budget increased from £43,745 to £53,745 – with the additional £10,000 being funded from earmarked reserves. This amended budget was approved by the CJC.

4.4 Corporate Plan

On the 1st November 2023 the MWCJC published its Corporate Plan for public consultation.

The Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee was created last year, and although it is in the initial stages of its work, has set out a Draft Corporate Plan describing the strategic direction of the Committee for the next 4-5 years.

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.

5. Integrated Impact Assessment:

- 5.1 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.

6. Workforce Impacts:

- 6.1 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.

7. Legal Impacts:

- 7.1 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.

8. Risk Management Impacts:

- 8.1 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.

9. Consultation:

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

10. Reasons for Proposed Decision:

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

11. Recommendations

- 11.1. Members note the content of this report.

