

NORTH WALES CJC ECONOMIC WELL-BEING SUB-COMMITTEE
06/02/2026

Present:

Councillors: Councillor Mark Pritchard (Wrexham County Borough Council) (Chair)
Councillor Jason McLellan (Denbighshire Council) (Vice-chair).

Dave Hughes (Flintshire County Council), Nia Jeffreys (Cyngor Gwynedd) and Gary Pritchard (Isle of Anglesey County Council).

Co-opted Members: Professor Paul Spencer (Bangor University), Professor Joe Yates (Wrexham University), Aled Jones-Griffith (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai), David Roberts (Chair of the Regional Skills Partnership), Edgar Wyn Owen (Eryri National Park) and Dave Penrith (Non-executive Adviser).

Chief Executives of Constituent Councils: Dylan Williams (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Sioned Williams (Cyngor Gwynedd), Rhun ap Gareth (Conwy County Borough Council), Helen White (Denbighshire County Council) and Richard Weigh (Wrexham County Borough Council).

Other officers present: Alwen Williams (Chief Executive of the North Wales CJC), Hedd Vaughan-Evans (Head of Operations), Dewi Morgan (Chief Finance Officer), Sian Pugh (Assistant Head of Finance), Sara Jane Jones (Senior Accountant), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Mark Watkins (Temporary Head of Legal), Claire Incledon (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Colin David Mathews (Land and Property Programme Manager), Eiliw Alaw Hughes (Growth Deal Programme Manager), Meghan Davies (Energy and Zero Net Manager), Nia Medi Williams (Resources and Operations Manager), Iain Taylor (IMT Consulting) and Rhodri Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

Observers: Wendy Boddington (Welsh Government) and Gareth Ashman (UK Government)

Others invited:

Item 10: Stephen McGregor and Jon Travis (Welsh Government)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

- Councillor Julie Fallon (Conwy County Borough Council)
- Professor Edmund Burke (Bangor University) with Professor Paul Spencer deputising.
- Yana Williams (Coleg Cambria)
- Dafydd Gibbard (Cyngor Gwynedd) with Sioned Williams deputising.
- Alwyn Jones (Wrexham County Borough Council) with Richard Weigh deputising.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Declarations of personal interest for Item 10 were received from Wendy Boddington (Welsh Government Observer) and Gareth Ashman (UK Government Observers). It was noted that it was a prejudicial interest and they left the meeting for the discussion on the item, after the introduction to the item and the opportunity for Members to ask further questions.

A declaration of personal interest for Item 11 was received from Professor Joe Yates (University of Wrexham). He noted that it was a prejudicial interest and he left the meeting for the item.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the meetings held on 5 December 2025 as a true record.

5. NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL - QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT

The report was presented by the Head of Operations.

DECISION

- 1. To note the Quarter 3 Performance Report and updated Portfolio Risk Register.**
- 2. To approve the submission of the Quarter 3 Performance Report to the Welsh Government and UK Government, as well as the local authority scrutiny committees.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Quarterly reporting on progress against the North Wales Growth Deal is one of the requirements of the Final Growth Deal Agreement.

DISCUSSION

Members were guided through several highlights such as five projects from the Joint Committee's reserve list having been formally approved to be part of the Growth Deal. These were detailed to include a Business Justification Case for Society 5.0, North Anglesey Sites and Buildings, the Freeport Gateway and Outline Business Cases for the Prince Project and Venue Cymru Futures Project.

It was explained that a second Portfolio Review had been completed considering the projects reporting as red. It was noted that this had freed up £58 million of funding to be reinvested by this Sub-committee.

An update was given that two change requests had recently been approved, namely the Former North Wales Hospital site and the Responsible Adventures project. Pride was expressed that the Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub Grant Funding Agreement had also been approved in November 2025, confirming that local company OBR Construction had been appointed to construct the Dairy Sheep Wales site.

It was pointed out that two launch events had been held for the CanfodAu building of Wrexham University and Grŵp Llandrillo Menai's Academi Croeso.

Pride was expressed that two Non-executive Advisors had been appointed. It was explained that they would play a key role as Chair and Vice-chair of the new Business Advisory Board.

It was confirmed that the Holyhead Hydrogen Hub project was the only one currently under review as it reported red against the portfolio's delivery profile. However, it was noted that the funding for it had been earmarked. An update was given that work was being done to develop key matters and resolve risks to ensure that an Outline Business Case was developed on this project to ensure the project continued into the future. An update was shared that six projects were active, 10 had been approved but were not operational, 7 Business Cases were under development and 15 projects remained on the reserve list.

The Growth Deal investment was reported noting that approximately £27 million had been invested to date. An update was given that this was estimated to be approximately £30 million by the end of the current financial year due to projects developing faster and more Business Cases being developed and becoming operational. It was also noted that there was no update on the new jobs created through the projects in this report confirming that this would be updated by the Quarter 4 report.

It was stressed that the risk register was fully updated by the Portfolio Management Office on a regular basis. It was confirmed that there was no change in the risk rating from what had been reported in Quarter 2. It was added that four residual risks were reporting as red, namely private sector investment, spending objectives, statutory planning and consent and the economic context meaning that the risk profile remained high.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:

In response to comments about the information published regarding the jobs that had been created, the types of roles, their salary value and the area they were located in, the Head of Operations confirmed that a request had been shared with Members to investigate what information they wished to see. It was further elaborated that the Head of Operations had contacted Members with a breakdown of employment information, asking them to contact the Portfolio Management Office if they wished to receive additional information. It was acknowledged that no response had been received from Members to this request. It was confirmed that the request would be circulated following this meeting, with further requested information being incorporated into the Quarter 4 review.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

6. 2026/27 BUDGET

The report was presented by the Assistant Head of Finance.

DECISION

- 1. To note the Growth Deal revenue budget for 2026/27.**
- 2. To note the funding contributions, including partner contributions, local government supplementary contributions and partner interest contributions.**
- 3. To note the Growth Deal capital budget for 2026/27.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Growth Deal required an annual budget to operate effectively within the funding available.

DISCUSSION

Members were reminded that the Growth Deal budget had already been approved as part of the 2026/27 Budget report which had been presented to the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee at its meeting on 23 January 2026.

It was confirmed that the revenue expenditure budget for 2026/27 was in the region of £2.95 million explaining that this money came from the following sources:

- £470,000 partner contributions
- £240,000 local authority supplementary contributions
- £154,000 partner interest rates
- £660,000 of the Growth Deal grant earmarked for the revenue element
- £435,000 of the Growth Deal grant earmarked from the projects
- £987,000 from the resource fund.

It was explained that there was no increase in partner contributions because a decrease in the employer's pension contribution rate from 2026/27 offset the out-turn adjustment for 2025/26, and the salary inflation estimate for 2026/27.

It was highlighted that changes in projects in the capital profile had led to an overall increase in the estimated cost of borrowing in line with the calculation made in the 2025/26 budget. It was noted that some partners were leading Growth Deal projects themselves and that the associated cost of borrowing had been added to their interest rates. However, it was noted that the contributions were within the threshold approved in the Delivery and Funding Agreement.

An up-to-date spending profile for each project within the Growth Deal had been shared for the period between 2021/22 and 2034/35. The profile for the 2.15% that was used to fund the revenue budget had also been shared. It was stressed that the profile was based on the timeline of the latest projects noting that it would be constantly reviewed as business cases were approved.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

7. 2025/26 REVENUE AND CAPITAL POSITION – END OF DECEMBER 2025 REVIEW

The report was presented by the Assistant Head of Finance.

DECISION

- 1. To note the end of December 2025 revenue review, including the reserves position.**
- 2. To note and accept the Growth Deal's revised capital expenditure profile.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

An underspend of £618,025 was projected against the Economic Well-being Sub-committee's revenue budget for 2025/26. The final underspend at the end of the financial year would be used to reduce the amount claimed from the North Wales Growth Deal grant and resource fund, and approval would be sought when the out-turn report was submitted to the CJC.

To note a slippage on the capital programme, with an estimated expenditure of £22.15m in 2025/26 compared with the approved budget of £29.61m for the year.

DISCUSSION

Members were reminded that this review of the revenue and capital position for 2025/26 had been approved as part of the '2025/26 Review' report which had been submitted to the Corporate Joint Committee at its meeting on 23 January 2026.

An estimate of the financial position of the Growth Deal had been provided, confirming that an underspend of £618,000 was projected by the end of the current financial year. It was noted that the review in July 2025 had predicted an underspend of £281,000, explaining that this increase was mainly due to further underspending in employee spending as well as additional government roles, accountable body Support services and projects.

An estimated balance of the Growth Deal funds was shared as of 31 March 2026 for information.

A revised capital profile for the Growth Deal was reported, explaining that there had been a net reduction of £7.46 million in the expected expenditure for 2025/26. This was noted to be due to slippages in some projects. However, it was confirmed that the development of projects such as Cydnerth, Environmental Biotechnology Centre and the Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub had contributed to reducing this underspend.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:

In response to comments about an underspend in employee spending, the Assistant Head of Finance confirmed that it was an underspend as it was not possible to appoint individuals to some posts until later in the year. It was elaborated that options on what to do with this underspend funding would be presented to Members at the end of the financial year. The Monitoring Officer noted that some budgets had been protected following the transfer arrangement of the Growth Deal in 2025.

There was concern that there was an underspend of approximately £618,000 within the Growth Deal, as Local Authorities were under pressure from a lack of effective budgeting. In response, the Chief Executive noted that Ambition North Wales did not have a regular and consistent core income and emphasised that its financial position was different from that of the Local Authorities.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

8. FLINTSHIRE AND WREXHAM INVESTMENT ZONE - YEAR 2 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN (ADP)

The report was presented by the Chief Executive and IMT Consulting advisor.

DECISION

- **To approve the Annual Delivery Plan's investment allocations for Year 2 and note the Year 1 allocations that would be used as part of the Year 2 programme.**
- **To approve the Investment Zone Programme, including a £4m allocation to Wrexham University's Business Gateway project.**
- **To authorise the CJC's Section 151 Officer to sign and issue the ADP documents to the UK Government and Welsh Government and make any further non-material amendments necessary to agree the ADP with the UK Government and Welsh Government.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Investment Zones were required to agree on an Annual Delivery Plan with the UK Government and Welsh Government in the final quarter of the financial year to secure the annual payment from the Welsh Government in April in every financial year.

DISCUSSION

It was explained that the report noted the proposed Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone Year 2 Annual Delivery Plan programme for the 2026/27 financial year. Details were provided on work that had been undertaken during the first year and it was reported on the allocations that had been submitted to the UK Government and Welsh Government for Year 2, confirming that it was expected to be received in April 2026. Pride was expressed that this development ensured the continuity of development and momentum of the first year.

Members were reminded of the developments achieved within the first year, including establishing the governance structure of the Programme, forming the Programme's planning infrastructure as well as the initial development of the priority projects.

Members were guided through the allocations that had been submitted for Year 2, as well as the developments that were expected to be achieved for the Programme. It was emphasised that these targets had been formulated in line with the objectives of the Investment Zone as they related to the themes of infrastructure, skills, innovation and business support.

It was highlighted that this plan placed an emphasised on delivery, and that it reflected the change from the first year which had focused on establishing a robust procedure. A busy year was anticipated of incorporating the projects and procedures during Year 2.

It was reported that the proposed scheme incorporated minor changes agreed within the first year such as allowing £4 million to support Wrexham University's Business Gateway project.

It was confirmed that consultation had been undertaken with the leaders of Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Council and that their input was having an impact on the governance of the Investment Zone. It was elaborated that consultations were a very important element of the Investment Zone, with every effort being made to ensure that it inspired young people, business owners and that all individuals who could benefit from the Investment Zone were aware of how they could do so. It was noted that some of the projects would be presented to Members to be able to sharpen the best way to promote them more widely.

It was announced that a Business Support Programme had recently been launched which was a Programme where Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Council made the final decision on the projects selected. It was confirmed that the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee would continue to receive business cases for the major projects, with a Business Case for a bus network transformation project expected soon. It was noted that the Regional Skills Board would receive proposals from Wrexham University and Coleg Cambria before Members decided which proposals the Investment Zone could support.

It was detailed that several projects had been in development over the last 18 months, while the Investment Zone was being formed. It was explained that a Memorandum of Understanding was expected from the Governments to be able to co-ordinate the approval of the Investment Zone programmes to be able to develop a grant proposal to assist the Programme.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:

It was confirmed that this was the first Investment Zone to be made outside of England. Gratitude was expressed to everyone who had developed it on a rapid scale, in the hope that the development would continue at the same pace in future.

Pride was expressed that the Investment Zone was being developed and that there was close collaboration between Flintshire County Council, Wrexham County Council and all partners who were developing it. Comments on the need to ensure that the work undertaken was effectively promoted were echoed.

Details were provided on allocations within the Investment Zone's 'Infrastructure' theme, noting support to increase capital contribution to up to £6 million to the Padeswood Siding project, subject to the change request process between the Welsh Government and the Ambition North Wales Growth Deal.

Gratitude was expressed to everyone who had worked to develop the Investment Zone so far, looking ahead to continuing to work together in future.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

9. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

A vote was taken on the proposal to exclude the press and public, and Councillor Nia Jeffreys abstained her vote on this item.

The Chair shall propose to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion on the following items due to the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972: Information about the financial or business transactions of any specific person (including the authority that retains that information).

There is an acknowledged public interest in being open about the use of public resources and related financial matters. However, it was acknowledged that there were occasions, in order to protect financial and commercial interests, that such information needed to be discussed without being publicised. The report was specifically regarding financial and business matters together with associated discussions. The publication of such commercially sensitive information could adversely affect the interests of the bodies and the CJC and undermine the confidence of other Growth Deal participants in sharing sensitive information for consideration. This would be contrary to the wider public interest of securing the best overall outcome.

10. PADESWOOD - REQUEST FOR CHANGE

The report was presented by Welsh Government and UK Government representatives.

RESOLVED

To support the request for change from the Welsh Government and allocate additional funding from the Growth Deal and Investment Zone, subject to:

- 1. Reaching an agreement on matters discussed in section 6.3(a) and (b) of the report.**
- 2. That the investment noted in part 6.3(c) of the report will be a funding condition to be implemented prior to the approval of the Full Business Case**

and/or for it to be included in the Grant Funding Agreement, whichever comes first.

- 3. That the approval of the Full Business Case will be subject to the investment decisions in section 6.3(d).**

To delegate to the Portfolio Director to discuss with the Welsh Government and UK Government the conditions imposed with final approval to be sought from the Economic Well-being Sub-committee (subject to the advice of the Monitoring Officer), in consultation with the Chair and Vice-chair.

That the Sub-committee notes that the splitting of funding between the Growth Deal and Investment Zone is the subject of separate discussions and decisions prior to the approval of the Full Business Case.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

In accordance with the change management process being implemented, to consider the request for change submitted and its implications.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

11. OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE - WREXHAM BUSINESS GATEWAY

The report was presented by representatives of the Growth Deal Programme Manager

RESOLVED

To approve the Outline Business Case for the Wrexham Business Gateway Project, subject to approval from the Welsh Government and UK Government of the assurance process held, and that Wrexham University addresses the matters noted in the report, as described in Section 7, and ask for a Full Business Case to be prepared for the Sub-committee's consideration.

To authorise the Portfolio Director in consultation with the Chair, the Vice-chair, the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer to agree on draft terms in accordance with this report as a basis for the final funding arrangements for the project to be committed subject to Full Business Case approval.

That the approval from the Sub-committee is valid for a period of twelve months and should the project not proceed to an approved Full Business Case during this time, it will be required to return and re-present the business case to the Sub-committee for approval.

To note the intention to split the funding between the Growth Deal and Investment Zone and that this position will be confirmed at Full Business Case stage.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To seek the Sub-committee's approval of the Outline Business Case for the Wrexham Business Gateway from Wrexham University.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

The meeting commenced at 9:30 and concluded at 11:45.

Chair