

NORTH WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE 7/11/25

Present: Chair: Councillor Mark Pritchard (Wrexham County Borough Council).

Councillors: Dave Hughes (Flintshire County Council), Nia Jeffreys (Cyngor Gwynedd), Julie Fallon (Conwy County Borough Council), Gary Pritchard (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Jason McLellan (Denbighshire County Council) and Edgar Owen (Chair of Eryri National Park Authority)

Chief Executives of Constituent Councils: Dafydd Gibbard (Cyngor Gwynedd), Dylan Williams (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Rhun ap Gareth (Conwy County Borough Council), Neal Cockerton (Flintshire County Council), Graham Boase (Denbighshire County Council), Alwyn Jones (Wrexham County Borough Council) and Jonathan Cawley (Eryri National Park Authority)

Other officers present: Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer – Cyngor Gwynedd), Dewi Aeron Morgan (CJC Statutory Finance Officer), Sara Jane Jones (Senior Accountant Officer – Cyngor Gwynedd), Nia Medi Williams (Operations and Resources Manager – Ambition North Wales), Hedd Vaughan-Evans (Head of Operations - Ambition North Wales), Claire Incledon (CJC Acting Deputy Monitoring Officer), Iain Taylor (AMION Consulting), David Hole (CJC Implementation Programme Lead), Angharad Williams (Programme Support Officer – Ambition North Wales), Elin Hughes (Growth Deal Programme Manager – Ambition North Wales), David Mathews (Land and Property Programme Manager – Ambition North Wales), Meghan Davies (Energy and Net Zero Programme Manager – Ambition North Wales), Stuart Whitfield (Digital Programme Manager – Ambition North Wales), Andy Roberts (CJC Operational Programme Manager – Ambition North Wales), Adam Graham (Senior Transport Officer – Ambition North Wales), Allan Pitt (ARUP), Gareth Ashman (UK Government), Wendy Boddington (Welsh Government) and Sera Whitley (Democracy Services - Cyngor Gwynedd).

1. ELECT VICE-CHAIR FOR 2025/26

Councillor Jason McLellan was elected Vice-chair of the Joint Committee for 2025/26.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alwen Williams (CJC Chief Executive) and Sian Pugh (Assistant Head of Finance – Cyngor Gwynedd).

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor Dave Hughes (Flintshire County Council) for Item 5 due to personal matters. The member did not consider them to be prejudicial interests, and did not leave the meeting during the discussion.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

None to note.

5. FLINTSHIRE AND WREXHAM INVESTMENT ZONE

The report was presented by Iwan Evans, Monitoring Officer and Iain Taylor from AMION Consulting.

RESOLVED:

The Update Report was accepted and the work undertaken by Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council and the Investment Zone team, Welsh Government and UK Government was noted.

A draft Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) was approved between the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC), Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council, delegating the right to agree and finalise the final version to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, the Vice-chair and Leader of Denbighshire County Council, as the appointed representatives of the Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone Advisory Board.

A Year 1 and 2 Schedule of Projects, activities and milestones drafted to support the Annual Delivery Plan was approved.

A draft Memorandum of Understanding was approved, delegating the right to agree and finalise the final version to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, the Vice-chair and Leader of Denbighshire County Council, as the appointed representatives of the Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone Advisory Board.

DISCUSSION

The Members were thanked for their time and consideration of the report.

It was reported that the development of the programme was now at a key point and had reached the approval phase with the Welsh Government and the UK Government. The Five Gateways Process had expired and the agreement for the Gateways had been accepted. It was explained that the CJC's approval for the Memorandum of Understanding and the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) between the CJC, Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council was required. It was elaborated that these would govern the transfer of revenue funding and key activities in the programme.

It was explained that annual delivery plans would be agreed every year to support the way the Investment Zones were structured and delivered. The draft Annual Delivery Plan would be submitted to the meeting of the Investment Zone Work Group, where the leaders of Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council would meet and review the Annual Delivery Plan. It was noted that the intention was to hold a meeting of the Investment Zone Work Group on 28 November, to discuss the programme's initial activities. Further details were given of another meeting to be held to discuss the second year Delivery Plan.

An overview was given to Members of the Annual Delivery Plan, drawing particular attention to some of the key points of the Investment Zone Programme included in Appendix 2. It was noted that these had been split into business support, skills, innovation, infrastructure and tax sites. The members were informed that the tax sites had been published on Legislation.gov, and they would come into force legally on 21 November.

The members were informed that should the CJC approve the Memorandum of Joint

Understanding and the IAA, that the Government would act to issue signed versions of the document within the week.

Members' attention was drawn to the Delivery Plan, highlighting the early work. The members were reminded that it was a Regional Skills Partnership project jointly with Wrexham University and Coleg Cambria. It was explained that the finance to administer the business grants was being delegated to Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council. It was recognised that there was a positive increase in terms of the National Manufacturing Institute for Wales, with the intention of bringing this to North-east Wales as well as developments for decarbonisation programmes in industry and the transformation project supported by AMRC. It was elaborated that good progress was being made with the infrastructure requirements of the tax sites, with premises already being constructed in Deeside and projects promoted to be considered for planning in Wrexham. Further details would be presented to the Councils of Flintshire and Wrexham at the end of November, with items being submitted again to the Economic Well-being Sub-committee.

It was explained that this was the last step in the decisions of the CJC in terms of constructing the Growth Zone, and it was explained that they were contracts that committed the CJC to the accountable body role. As an accountable body, the CJC sat between the Governments and therefore the Memorandum of Joint Understanding signed by the CJC and the Government was an ethical commitment to how the project was run. Funding letters, i.e. contractual documents and funding conditions, from the Governments would be sent subsequently.

It was noted that the IAA was a collaboration agreement between the Councils and the CJC, and included how the Investment Zone was run, the governance, the revenue finance arrangements, and the arrangements to comply with the conditions set by the Government for the CJC. It was elaborated that it was a document that built on the decision taken in the last few months in the gateways to create the Investment Zone. Furthermore, it was explained that the Memorandum of Joint Understanding had been re-submitted to the CJC and although it did not appear that there had been many amendments since July, it referred to the control and Management and Non-domestic Tax that would need to be addressed in the Memorandum of Joint Understanding.

It was pointed out that a draft of the IAA was before Members. Apologies were tended that the document was currently only available in English. It was explained that this was currently an initial version of the existing document to extend the discussion, and to ensure that the project moved forward they requested delegated powers to complete the documents in collaboration with Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council. It was noted that they had received positive feedback from the Monitoring Officers of Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council. It was emphasised that the right to proceed with the Memorandum of Joint Understanding and the IAA was essential, to draw documents together and give a foundation for the significant work of presenting the Investment Zone.

The Chair extended his thanks to the consultant from AMION Consulting; to Cyngor Gwynedd's legal team and to the Chief Executive and Leader of Flintshire County Council for their partnership with the project. It was stated that this was an excellent opportunity for Flintshire and Wrexham to deliver for businesses in north Wales. Attention was drawn to the importance of the project, especially as a result of the increase in high-quality posts in wider regional economies.

6. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED 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 Section 100A(2) of the Local Government Act 1972. The report relates to financial information associated with the Regional Transport Fund, which has been designated as confidential information by the Welsh Government for the provisions of Section 100 (A)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972. As a consequence, it is a requirement that the report is excluded from publication as this would disclose confidential information.

7. REGIONAL TRANSPORT FUND YEAR 1 PROGRAMME

The report was presented by Adam Graham, Senior Transport Officer.

RESOLVED:

The draft Plan Programme was approved for submission to the Welsh Government.

DISCUSSION

The report was discussed.

The meeting commenced at 12:00 and concluded at 12:30

CHAIRMAN