
NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD
22/09/23

Present:

Voting Members - Councillors: - Barry Mellor (Denbighshire Council), Llinos Medi Huws (Cyngor Ynys Môn), Mark Pritchard (Wrexham County Borough Council), Charlie McCoubrey (Conwy County Borough Council) and Dyfrig Siencyn (Cyngor Gwynedd) (Chair).

Advisors – Dafydd Evans (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai), Dr Maria Hinfelaar (Glyndŵr University, Wrexham) and Professor Paul Spencer (Bangor University).

Chief Officers - Dylan Williams (Cyngor Ynys Môn), Rhun ap Gareth (Conwy County Borough Council), Andrew Farrow (Flintshire Council), Sioned Williams (Cyngor Gwynedd), David Fitzsimon (Wrexham County Borough Council) and Graham Boase (Denbighshire Council).

Officers in attendance -

Host Authority: - Dewi A. Morgan (Statutory Finance Officer), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Sian Pugh (Assistant Head of Finance and Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer).

North Wales Ambition: - Alwen Williams (Portfolio Director), Hedd Vaughan-Evans (Head of Operations), Nia Medi Williams (Senior Operations Officer) and David Mathews (Land and Property Programme Manager).

Observer - Dewi Williams (Welsh Government).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from: -

- Councillor Ian Roberts (Flintshire County Council);
- Councillor Jason McLellan (Denbighshire Council) with Councillor Barry Mellor deputising.
- Yana Williams (Coleg Cambria).
- Professor Edmund Burke (Bangor University) with Professor Paul Spencer deputising.
- Ian Bancroft (Wrexham County Borough Council) with David Fitzsimon deputising.
- Dafydd Gibbard (Cyngor Gwynedd) with Sioned Williams deputising.
- Neal Cockerton (Flintshire County Council) with Andrew Farrow deputising.

The Chairman welcomed the deputies to the meeting.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

3. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent matters were raised.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 21 July 2023, as a true record.

5. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET 2023/24 - END OF AUGUST REVIEW 2023

The report was presented by Sian Pugh (Assistant Head of Finance).

RESOLVED

- (1) To note and accept the Ambition Board's end of August 2023 revenue review (Appendix 1 to the report).**
- (2) To note and accept the Ambition Board's reserves update (Appendix 2).**
- (3) Agree on the Ambition Board's revised capital expenditure profile (Appendix 3).**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

- (1) To note a projected underspend of £266,683 against the revenue budget in 2023/24 that was mainly due to the success of the Portfolio Management Office with their application to the regional Shared Prosperity Fund. 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 the earmarked fund.
- (2) To note a further slippage on the capital programme, with an estimate of £7.13m expenditure in 2023/24 compared with the approved budget of £11.25m for the year.

DISCUSSION

The need to recognise and appreciate the team's work drawing funding down from the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF).

It was noted, although the current situation was stable that the Board noted the financial challenges that face it in the future, and extremely difficult discussions would have to be discussed over the next few months.

It was asked if the better-than-expected interest on balances this year was a significant factor in moving forward. In response, it was explained that the interest was likely to be over £2m this year, however this meant that our borrowing costs would be higher in the future, and the interest would contribute to this.

6. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

As the Chair was experiencing technical difficulties, the meeting was chaired by the Vice-chair, Councillor Mark Pritchard, during the discussion on this item.

The report was submitted by Hedd Vaughan-Evans (Head of Operations).

RESOLVED to accept and approve the Annual Governance Statement.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 set fixed requirements on public bodies that operate partnership management arrangements through formal joint committees.

Section 5 requires the Joint Committee to review and approve a statement of internal management. The Annual Governance Statement has been prepared to comply with this requirement. The document had been produced to offer a framework for the Ambition Board's operation.

DISCUSSION

Referring to the table on page 13 of the English version of the Governance Statement, it was noted that there were two asterisks at the side of the Amber Delivery Confidence Assessment for Holyhead Port, however there was no further explanation regarding this. In response, it was explained that: -

- The two asterisks referred to the fact that at the time we were waiting for the Welsh Government to sign the Harbour Revision Order, that was seen by the team as a significant risk outside the control of the project itself.
- The Welsh Government had by now signed the Order and therefore the risk had been removed.
- The only purpose of the asterisk near the reference to the Gateway 2 PAR Review for the Last Few % Project was to explain the meaning of PAR, however this explanation had not been included in the document either.
- These asterisks would be added to the final version of the Statement.

It was noted that there were no asterisks opposite the projects in the Welsh version of the Statement, and it was explained that the team would also amend that version and would ensure consistency between both languages.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 10:50am.

Chair