
NORTH WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE
22/11/24

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

Councillors: Robin Williams (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Dave Hughes (Flintshire County Council), Charlie McCoubrey (Conwy County Borough Council), Jason McLellan (Denbighshire County Council) and Edgar Owen (Eryri National Park Authority).

Chief Officers: Dafydd Gibbard (Cyngor Gwynedd), Dylan Williams (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Rhun ap Gareth (Conwy County Borough Council), Neal Cockerton (Flintshire County Council), Linda Roberts (Wrexham County Borough Council), Gary Williams (Denbighshire County Council) and Iwan Jones (Eryri National Park Authority).

Statutory Officers

Dewi Morgan (Chief Finance Officer) and Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer).

Other officers present

Alwen Williams (Interim Chief Executive of the CJC), Sian Pugh (Assistant Head of Finance), Iain Taylor (AMION Consulting Adviser), Claire Incedon (Solicitor), Jack Latkovic (Corporate Joint Committee Democracy Officer) and Sioned Mai Jones (Democracy Team Leader).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

- Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Cyngor Gwynedd)
- Councillor Gary Pritchard (Isle of Anglesey County Council) with Councillor Robin Williams deputising.
- Ian Bancroft (Wrexham County Borough Council) with Linda Roberts deputising
- Graham Boase (Denbighshire County Council) with Gary Williams deputising.
- David Hole (Corporate Joint Committee Implementation Programme Manager).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Item 5: A declaration of personal interest was received from Alwen Williams, Interim Chief Executive of the CJC for the last part of the report that related to extending her secondment in the role. She was of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest and withdrew from the meeting during the discussion.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 11 October 2024, as a true record.

5. UPDATE: FUNCTIONS OF THE NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD – TRANSFER TO THE CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE

The report was presented by Alwen Williams, Interim Chief Executive of the CJC and Dafydd Gibbard, Chief Executive, Cyngor Gwynedd.

RESOLVED:

To accept the progress update on work to establish the North Wales CJC including the transfer of the Growth Deal and progressing on tasks required to fulfil the statutory duties of the CJC.

To agree to receive a report from the Portfolio Director at the next meeting of the Corporate Joint Committee providing a further update on the progress of the transfer with reference to the Strategic Development Plan.

To authorise the Portfolio Director to agree a revised transfer programme and date with the Local Authorities and Higher and Further Education partners within the target date of 1 April 2025.

To approve an extension of the interim arrangement for the Portfolio Director of the Economic Ambition Board to assume the role of Chief Executive of the Corporate Joint Committee on an interim basis for two days a week up to 31 March 2025 or the transfer date, whichever comes first.

DISCUSSION

A summary of the report was provided, which presented a further update on the progress made to establish the Corporate Joint Committee and seeking approval to extend the arrangement whereby the Portfolio Director assumes the role of Interim Chief Executive for two days a week up to 31 March 2025 or the transfer date.

The CJC was reminded of the current arrangements, highlighting that the functions and arrangements of the Ambition Board were set out in GA2 which included the governance arrangements and financial support for the Growth Deal. It was explained that the Growth Deal and financial arrangements would transfer to the CJC, and the importance of regional joint working was emphasised so that partners agreed on arrangements for undertaking regional functions as part of establishing the CJC. It was confirmed that a precise transfer model would be agreed with partners as part of the next steps.

The officers detailed the key legal issues being developed in order to execute the transfer as set out in part 3.3 of the report, and they referenced the key areas of focus.

They explained why the provisional target date of 1st November that had been set for transferring functions from the Ambition Board to the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee was not achievable, and highlighted the key decisions that were required before transferring. They elaborated on the next steps of dealing with the legal, financial and governance arrangements to enable a successful transfer in future.

Reference was made to part 4.6 to 4.8 of the report which summarised the revised timetable which proposed that the Growth Deal be transferred by 1st April, 2025 at the latest.

The Chair thanked the Interim Chief Executive of the CJC for the comprehensive report and asked whether there were enough resources available to fulfil the requirements as set out in the report against the revised timetable. In response it was noted that not all the resources

were available, and gaps did exist, specifically relating to some of the strategic duties; it was noted that they had not identified a resource for progressing with the work. Reference was made to the resources that had been identified to date which included a temporary Programme Manager and Solicitor to provide additional legal support.

They added that the CJC had approved a resources model previously, but it was not possible to recruit or have the resources in place until the Growth Deal and its people had transferred to the CJC. It was noted that a detailed and clear transition plan has been developed for the transfer of the Growth Deal, but the pace at which that plan could be implemented depended on obtaining the approvals set out in the report. It was believed that the revised date of 1st April 2025 was more achievable and that there was sufficient time before then to get everything in place to transfer.

A member expressed their view that we cannot continue to give extension after extension and asked whether consideration needed to be given to buying additional resources in order to move the plans forward and support the interim Chief Executive of the CJC to meet the deadlines.

In response, it was expressed with regard to the Transport Plan that this had already happened and that the support of ARUP consultants had been secured for the development of the regional Transport Plan, and that the timetable was now being met. The officers noted that the support being received from ARUP helped to drive the momentum forward. They believed that there was an opportunity to do the same for the Strategic Development Plan, and the CJC would go out to tender for this. They added that it was essential to work with someone with a planning background who will be able to drive the programme forward. It was noted that agencies or consultants would be considered but it was felt that it would be beneficial to work with internal clients in the region, for example if there was capacity within North Wales Councils. It was confirmed that secondments were being considered and welcomed. The interim Chief Executive of the CJC proposed to submit a report at the next meeting outlining the above.

The importance of meeting the revised transfer date of April 1st was emphasised, recognising that there were complex issues that must be dealt with. It was agreed to request a report from the Portfolio Director at the next meeting of the Corporate Joint Committee, providing a further update on the progress of the transfer with reference to the Strategic Development Plan.

The Interim Chief Executive of the CJC left the meeting, and the decision sought in part 2.3 of the report was discussed. This proposal was thought to be fair and identified the most pragmatic way forward. A member commented that there were concerns about the delays that had occurred and emphasised the importance of striving to meet the deadlines that existed. Everyone was asked to strive to meet the new deadline.

It was suggested to receive a monthly progress report in order to be updated on the progress and to ensure the work was on the right track. It was agreed to delegate this to the Chair. The Chair indicated that he would discuss with the interim Chief Executive of the CJC so that he received the progress report, then he would share it with the rest of the CJC.

6. FLINTSHIRE AND WREXHAM INVESTMENT ZONE – UPDATE ON PROGRESS

The report was presented by Alwen Williams, Interim Chief Executive of the CJC.

RESOLVED

To review and approve the Tax Sites identified (Deeside Gateway, Warren Hall and Wrexham Industrial Estate) and Retained Rates Areas (Deeside Gateway and Wrexham Industrial Estate).

To review and approve the proposed Common Model of Governance.

To review and approve the Investment Zone Themes (Innovation, Skills and Transport) and high-level interventions, which will be refined as part of Gateway 4 (Interventions) and consider the inclusion of 'Business Support' as the fourth theme, which addresses the intention to invest directly in advanced manufacturing businesses with advice and grant funding.

DISCUSSION

It was noted that the report provided the latest information on the progress of securing a new Investment Zone designation in Flintshire and Wrexham which would focus on Advanced Manufacturing.

Iain Taylor, AMION Consulting Adviser, was welcomed to the meeting. It was noted that Iain was working on developing the proposal for the investment zone. It was added that Iain had recent and very relevant experience of successfully leading Liverpool City region on delivering their investment zone which focused on life sciences, and that the contacts Iain had had been invaluable to the CJC in helping them to develop a firm proposal.

The AMION Consulting Advisor elaborated on the good progress being made on developing the proposal, and that they had begun confirming the basis of why they think these interventions could lead to a significant change in the growth of the manufacturing sector. It was believed that this would enable the employment of around 6,000 more people by the end of the programme.

He referred to the identified Tax Sites namely Deeside Gateway, Warren Hall and Wrexham Industrial Estate and referred to the benefits of these sites and the desire to move forward with the sites after gaining the CJC's approval.

The proposed Governance Structure as set out in part 7.9 of the report was outlined, detailing the partnership between the Corporate Joint Committee and the two Councils which was vital to the structure as well as the work of the Economic Well-being sub-committee. Reference was made to the functions of the Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone Working Group as well as the Investment Zone Shadow Advisory Board.

The Core Themes were detailed as set out in part 8.1 of the report, reporting that the Investment Zone would cluster investment across three core themes namely Skills, Innovation and Transport. The development of a fourth theme, Business Support, was proposed to provide a thematic foundation for advice and grant support to co-invest in advanced manufacturing businesses in Flintshire and Wrexham.

The AMION Consulting Adviser was thanked for the presentation, and the Interim Chief Executive of the CJC was thanked for the report. A member enquired about part 10.3 of the report, the Intervention Allocations, asking whether the figures and percentages stated in the table were correct in terms of the balance and if there will be flexibility in the future should another opportunity present itself. It was confirmed that the most effective and achievable programmes had been identified, and every year the CJC would approve an annual Delivery Plan. It was noted that the balance of the interventions could be examined then. It was added that the CJC would have authority to work through the programme and

consequently the flexibility throughout the programme to ensure the interventions had the greatest impact in Flintshire and Wrexham.

A member expressed their pride at seeing the Warren Hall site included in the report and was delighted that something was now being done here. Thanks were expressed to the AMION Consulting Adviser for his work and to the Interim Chief Executive of the CJC for the joint working, as well as the two Local Authorities. It was acknowledged that the work was moving ahead rapidly.

It was expressed that the region had been very fortunate to receive this funding and it was thought important to move at speed. The importance of laying foundations and getting everything in place in order to move forward to deliver for Flintshire and Wrexham as well as the rest of North Wales was highlighted, as the entire region would thrive.

The meeting commenced at 13:30 and concluded at 14:30.

(Chair)