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## REPORT TO THE CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE

18th July, 2025

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**TITLE:** Update on the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) for North Wales – Delivery Agreement

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### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. This report provides an update for the Corporate Joint Committee on progress with preparing a Delivery Agreement (DA) for the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) for North Wales, as well as highlighting some of the key issues that will need to be addressed to secure Welsh Government approval to commence the plan.

### 2. DECISION SOUGHT

- 2.1. To note the position with the SDP and the matters highlighted for future resolution.

### 3. REASON FOR THE DECISION

- 3.1. To ensure that the Corporate Joint Committee is made fully aware of the stage reached with the SDP, and the key matters that need to be resolved to commence the plan.

### 4. BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1. The Town and Country Planning (Strategic Development Plan)(Wales)Regulations 2021 (SDP Regulations) sub divide the process of producing an SDP into six key stages. These stages and the detailed requirements for each stage have been set out in a draft SDP manual that Welsh Government have yet to formally publish or consult on, but where officers in CJsCs have had a chance to review the draft manual and its requirements.



The SDP Process (from the draft SDP Manual)

- 4.2. The first stage in the process is the development of a Delivery Agreement. This is essentially a plan of how the plan will be produced, who will be involved, how, and when, and how long the plan will take to produce. It comprises two main parts: a Statement of Community Involvement that sets out who or which groups, bodies, or organisations the CJC will aim to engage in the process, the methods that will be used to consult, and the opportunities and ways in which interested parties can comment. The second part comprises a detailed timetable that breaks each key stage down into more detailed tasks, and sets out a timeframe for how long each task, stage, and the overall process will take to complete.
- 4.3. Once a Delivery Agreement has been drafted the CJC should aim to informally consult on its content, notwithstanding the fact that it is a procedural document, and does not contain any vision, objectives or policy direction at this stage. There is no statutory requirement therefore to consult on the Delivery Agreement, but it is considered good practice to make the draft Delivery Agreement available for interested parties to review and comment on.
- 4.4. Following consultation, and the consideration of any relevant comments, the CJC must adopt the Delivery Agreement by a formal resolution, prior to then submitting it to Welsh Government for consideration and agreement by Welsh Ministers. Until the Welsh Ministers sign off the Delivery Agreement, the CJC cannot commence the development of the SDP itself, although some work on the collation of background evidence can take place.
- 4.5. In addition to demonstrating to the Welsh Ministers that the Delivery Agreement is reasonable in terms of who it will consult, how and when, and the time it will take to produce the plan, as part of the Delivery Agreement the CJC must also assess and explain the resources it will need to undertake the SDP and the overall cost of doing so. Further to this, it must clearly set out how it will provide the necessary funding to meet those costs over the lifetime of the SDP production process. Until the full funding is identified, the CJC cannot formally submit the Delivery Agreement to Welsh Ministers for sign off and cannot therefore commence the SDP.

## 5. SDP PROGRESS

- 5.1. A draft Delivery Agreement has been produced for the North Wales SDP. This has been sent to officers at Welsh Government's Development Plan Team and in each of the respective Local Planning Authorities in North Wales for their comment and feedback. The draft Delivery Agreement is attached to this report as appendix 1.
- 5.2. The Delivery Agreement has also been informally reviewed and discussed by the Strategic Planning Sub-Committee of the CJC to ensure their full awareness and involvement in the process, and to gain feedback prior to beginning informal consultation. At the time of writing this report, the intention is to consult on the Delivery Agreement during July and August, and then report any feedback received to the CJC at its meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

## 6. DELIVERY AGREEMENT MAIN HEADLINES

- 6.1. There are several key matters to highlight for the CJC from the draft Delivery Agreement:
  - The draft programme envisages a start date for plan making in the first quarter of 2026, with a subsequent adoption date in the first quarter of 2031, so a five-year plan production timeframe overall;
  - A 25-year plan period from 2026 – 2051;
  - The SDP evidence base will draw substantially on a review of the evidence being produced to support existing Local Development Plan (LDP) Reviews;
  - The focus for formal engagement and consultation will be to rely on virtual methods given the geographical scale of the Region and the strategic scope of the SDP which will not necessarily identify local planning matters that are best dealt with by LDPs or LDP lites. This does not mean that for example local drop-in sessions cannot be coordinated, but this will rely on a collaborative approach with each LPA;
  - The overall cost of producing the SDP has been assessed at £3.276m and the forthcoming CJC budget setting process will need to identify how these costs can be budgeted for over the five-year lifetime of the plan making process;
  - Informal stakeholder consultation on the Delivery Agreement will take place during July and August and any comments made will be fed back to the Strategic Planning Sub-Committee and the CJC in September;
  - Formal submission of the delivery agreement to the Welsh Ministers is dependent on being able to demonstrate an adequate budget to meet the full costs of the SDP.

## 7. MAIN ISSUES/RISKS ARISING WITH SDP COMMENCEMENT

- 7.1. Looking ahead to beyond the sign-off of the Delivery Agreement by the Welsh Ministers, there are some key challenges to be addressed to set the correct context for commencement of work on the SDP itself. These include:
  - **Resources** – consideration of the approach to building an internal Planning Team within the CJC and the basis for doing so e.g. permanent recruitment or collaboration/secondment;
  - **Consultants** – it will be necessary to engage specialist consultants to provide support for key parts of the SDP process, initially by assisting the CJC to review and collate the evidence base that each of the partner Local Planning Authorities and National Park Authority have developed to support LDP work;
  - **Vision** – A key task is to develop an appropriate and integrated long-term vision for the SDP, that aligns with the overall purpose of the CJC, and the other policy areas within its

remit. Early work is being done to arrange a series of visioning workshops in the autumn with Members and planning, transport and economic development officers and key stakeholders. Further information will be provided on this;

- **Scale of growth** – It will be important to ensure that the SDP is genuinely a strategic plan that does not try to deal with matters that are more appropriately dealt with at the local level via individual LDPs. An important role for the SDP will be to set regional growth levels (employment, housing) and to distribute these down to the individual local authority level. It will also need to define what is meant by ‘strategic’ in terms of development site size e.g. a minimum employment site size or minimum 500 homes
- **Spatial Strategy** – The SDP will need to identify a high-level spatial strategy that highlights the key settlements and locations that are likely to be the focus for regional growth over the lifetime of the plan. This does not mean other settlements aren’t important, just that they will be more important at the local, LDP level;
- **Funding** – The CJC’s statutory duty to produce an SDP extends to meeting the full costs of doing so. The draft Delivery Agreement contains an assessment of these costs and section 8 of this report below, assesses the ability of the current SDP budget for 2025-26 to meet these costs, if projected forward unchanged;
- **Policy Integration** – A core principle behind the way the CJC works is to ensure that there is a high degree of policy integration and the SDP provides an opportunity to link to the work already done to create a Regional Transport Plan (RTP) to recognise the land use implications of the transport infrastructure programme, as well as informing the future direction of that. Economic Well Being will also be at the core of the SDP strategy, enabling regional economic growth, jobs and investment to continue.

## 7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. Costs will be drawn from existing North Wales CJC budgets with the necessary support from the CJC’s Legal and Finance teams. The CJC will also seek to secure further funding support from the Welsh Government. In terms of the present CJC budget for 2025-26 relating to the SDP, this budget would need to be increased by 50% of the current level annually, over the 2026-2031 plan production period, to meet the full costs of the SDP. A more detailed assessment will be presented to the CJC in September as part of a further report on the SDP.

## 8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The Corporate Joint Committee has a statutory duty to prepare a Strategic Development Plan further to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The specific requirements and steps to produce a Strategic Development Plan are set out in The Town and Country Planning (Strategic Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2021.

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### APPENDICES:

Draft Delivery Agreement

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### STATUTORY OFFICERS RESPONSE:

- i. **Monitoring Officer:**

No observations to add in relation to propriety

**ii. Statutory Finance Officer:**

As noted in the report, there is a budget in place for the development of the SDP. As noted, the decision sought is one of several steps in a long process and finance officers will continue to support officers and members as required.