
NORTH WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE
19/09/25

Present: Vice-chair: Charlie McCoubrey (Conwy County Borough Council).

Councillors: Dave Hughes (Flintshire County Council), Nia Wyn Jeffreys (Cyngor Gwynedd), Robin Williams (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Jason McLellan (Denbighshire County Council) and Edgar Owen (Chair of the Eryri National Park Authority).

Chief Executives of Constituent Councils: Dylan Williams (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Neal Cockerton (Flintshire County Council), Jonathan Cawley (Eryri National Park Authority), Rhun ap Iared (Conwy County Borough Council), Sioned Williams (Cyngor Gwynedd), Linda Roberts (Wrexham County Borough Council), and Gary Williams (Denbighshire County Council).

Other officers present: Alwen Williams (Chief Executive of the CJC), Claire Incledon (Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer – CJC), Dewi Aeron Morgan (Statutory Finance Officer of the CJC), Sian Pugh (Assistant Head of Finance - Cyngor Gwynedd), Sara Jane Jones (Senior Accountant, Cyngor Gwynedd), Iain Taylor (AMION Consulting), Andy Roberts (CJC Strategic Development Planning Officer), David Hole (CJC Implementation Programme Lead), Adam Graham (Ambition North Wales), Annes Sion (Democracy Team Leader - Cyngor Gwynedd) and Sera Whitley (Democracy Services Officer - Cyngor Gwynedd).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Mark Pritchard (Wrexham County Borough Council) (Chair), Gary Pritchard (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive – Cyngor Gwynedd), Alwyn Jones (Wrexham County Borough Council) and Graham Boase (Denbighshire County Council).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 July, 2025 as a true record.

5. 2025/26 REVENUE POSITION – END OF JULY 2025 REVIEW

The report was presented by Dewi A. Morgan, Head of Finance (CJC Statutory Finance Officer) and Sian Pugh, Assistant Head of Finance.

RESOLVED:

To note and accept the end of July 2025 revenue review for the Corporate Joint Committee (CJC).

To note and accept the end of July 2025 revenue review for the Economic Well-being Subcommittee (the Growth Deal), including the reserves position and the approval of the one-off virement in the budget relating to grant income and expenditure.

To note and accept the end of July 2025 revenue review for the Regional Skills Partnership.

DISCUSSION

A forecast review of the CJC's revenue position was submitted, including separate headings for Planning, Transport and the Investment Zone.

It was noted that the capital programme profile of the Growth Deal was currently being reviewed following the withdrawal of some schemes and the addition of new schemes from the reserve list. This work would be reported as part of the Portfolio Business Case in December and subsequently as part of the quarter three financial review.

It was elaborated that there was an estimated underspend of £411k for the CJC. This was mainly identified as due to underspending in employee spending, insurance, support systems and services, as well as a Welsh Government grant for the Regional Transport Plan and income from interest.

In addition, it was noted that there was an estimated underspend of £280k for the Growth Deal. It was explained that this was mainly due to underspending in employee spending, additional government jobs and the support services of the accountable body. Success was acknowledged with their Shared Prosperity Fund application, which had further contributed to the underspend in employee spending.

It was reported that a Welsh Government grant of £177k for the Energy Scheme and £444k from the Shared Prosperity Fund were included in the budget in the One-off Virements column.

A forecast of the funds' balance sheet as at 31 March 2026 was added, stating that they anticipated that borrowing would be required during the next financial year in order to fund the Growth Deal, and therefore these costs would be financed from the interest fund. A breakdown of expenditure on the Regional Skills Partnership was noted; it was elaborated that this expenditure was funded by a Welsh Government grant of £290 thousand and £12 thousand from reserves.

The members expressed their thanks for the report.

6. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

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

RESOLVED

To accept and approve the Annual Governance Statement for Ambition North Wales.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the Annual Governance Statement outlined that the governance arrangements in place were robust, transparent and based on best practice. It was highlighted that arrangements and processes were continually being adapted and that there was room for further development.

It was highlighted that it had been accepted by the Monitoring Officer and the Statutory Finance Officer.

Members thanked the officer for the report and highlighted section 6 of the report - Managing Risk, Performance and Finance, stating that risk management was paramount as a public body. However, it was expressed that the main risk was being too robust and to ensure a balance between spending money and risk management. It was responded by noting that the report recognised where the Joint Committee stood today and set out how to move forward. Attention was drawn to the recommendations to be refined further to achieve a balance between risk and expenditure as projects needed to move quickly. It was asked for plans that did not reach the requirements to be brought directly back to the Board for discussion.

7. CJC GOVERNANCE: ECONOMIC WELL-BEING SUB-COMMITTEE AMENDED TERMS OF REFERENCE

The report was submitted by Iwan Evans, Monitoring Officer (CJC Statutory Monitoring Officer).

RESOLVED:

The amended Terms of Reference and delegations for the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee were approved.

DISCUSSION

The CJC had been developing arrangements for the Investment Zone and had built a governance structure over recent months. Members were reminded that they had approved a governance framework at the meeting held in November, which meant that the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee would become the lead body in terms of administering and supporting the delivery of the Investment Zone. It was noted that this report recommended changes to the Terms of Reference of the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee to extend delegated rights to incorporate the delivery of the Investment Zone. It was noted that the changes were very similar to the powers assumed within the Growth Deal Terms of Reference, with the same type of principles. It was reiterated that the CJC would retain the powers related to fiscal matters, staffing policy, and continue to be involved in any major decisions around corporate implications to the Investment Zone.

Assurances were sought that the money that had been allocated to the Investment Zone was being spent in Wrexham and Flintshire. It was confirmed that the Terms of Reference stated that the entire Plan operated within the Memorandum of Joint Understanding, the Fiscal Agreements, and the Partnership Agreement. It was elaborated that the Joint Authority Agreement monitored how the Investment Zone was administered and distributed between Wrexham County Borough Council, Flintshire County Council, and the CJC.

8. FLINTSHIRE AND WREXHAM INVESTMENT ZONE

The report was submitted by Alwen Williams, Chief Executive of the CJC and Iain Taylor, AMION Consulting.

RESOLVED:

To accept the update report and note the work between the Investment Zone team, the Welsh Government and the UK Government to determine an acceptable allocation from within the £160m for the cost of tax relief associated with the occupation and development of Investment Zone Tax Sites.

To approve the key principles set out in the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) prepared by Geldards LLP for agreement between the CJC, Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council.

To approve the Terms of Reference for the Investment Zone Advisory Board.

To approve the members nominated for the Investment Zone Advisory Board and nominate a Council Member of the CJC to be appointed to the Board in accordance with the Terms of Reference.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted to provide an update on the work that had been achieved since July. The need to approve the key principles included in the Inter-authority Agreement was noted. The Terms of Reference of the Investment Zone Advisory Board, which would report on progress to the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee, were highlighted.

The need to nominate one member of the Joint Committee to be a member of the Advisory Board was noted and it was suggested that they should be someone other than the Flintshire and Wrexham members, as they were a central part of the project. Cllr Jason McLellan was appointed by the Joint Committee.

9. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN DELIVERY AGREEMENT

The report was submitted by Alwen Williams, Chief Executive and Andy Roberts, Regional Strategic Planning Officer.

RESOLVED

The draft Delivery Agreement was approved following consultation and was approved as the Draft Delivery Agreement inclusive of the amendments shown in the consultation report, ready for submission to the Welsh Government, subject to the resolution of the funding for the Strategic Development Plan (SDP).

It was agreed to revise the wording of the Report to highlight compliance with the Welsh Language Standards as part of the Strategic Development Plan, to ensure that the Welsh and English languages are equal.

DISCUSSION

It was submitted that the SDP Delivery Agreement contained information on four elements: how the CJC intended to undertake the SDP; who would be included; the timetable; and how it would be funded. The CJC would report on these to the Welsh Government.

The Delivery Agreement had been considered by the Strategic Planning Sub-Committee on 27 June, and it was recommended to the CJC on 18 July for approval for consultation. It was noted that a six-week consultation period had taken place. It was explained that a

follow-up consultation report included around 18 formal responses, which were of high quality. It was expressed that the responses offered useful guidance, and that they showed an intention to be involved in the process as it unfolded.

It was reminded that this was a procedural document, not a policy document. It was noted that the consultation allowed the first three of the four elements to be discussed and confirmed, but not the fourth element, which referred to the funding of the SDP. The recommendation to re-approve this as a Draft Delivery Agreement would establish the Board's position following the consultation and would allow, from a performance perspective, a claim to be made to the Welsh Government for a potential grant of £100k.

Concern was expressed about the lack of compliance with Welsh language standards, which had been highlighted by Cyngor Gwynedd in the consultation. It was noted that the issue had been included in the report but that no amendments had been made. Assurances were sought that the concerns were being considered so that the Welsh language and the English language would be treated equally. At present, it was expressed that the draft delivery agreement demonstrated that English was being treated favourably, demonstrated in such cases as having to make a request to receive documents in Welsh and having to request simultaneous translation at meetings.

Apologies were expressed and it was emphasised that the Welsh language standards were being taken seriously. It was proposed to include an amendment to demonstrate full compliance with Welsh language standards.

10. ISSUES AND OPTIONS RELATING TO FUNDING THE PRODUCTION OF THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The report was submitted by Alwen Williams, Chief Executive and Andy Roberts, Regional Strategic Planning Officer.

RESOLVED:

To consider the funding issues and options set out in the attached briefing note and consider all options for funding the SDP as part of the budget setting process, including making further representations to the Welsh Government.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted stating that it demonstrated how the plan could be delivered, its cost and to identify ways of meeting the financial shortfall.

Over the next 5 years the cost was estimated to be in the region of £3.27m. It was noted that the CJC had set a budget to begin the work on the Strategic Development Plan in its budget, which was projected to be around £431,000 annually over the 5 years. It was noted that this would not fully meet the costs. It was emphasised that this report did not require additional funding but rather recognised that there was a budget deficit and the need to find a way to meet the deficit.

It was expressed that Welsh Government had suggested that £400k could be made available in this financial year for all CJsCs to continue working on the Delivery Agreements. It was noted that this would offer £100k if it was distributed equally, but it was understood

that it was more likely to be offered to those CJs who had already started work on their Delivery Agreements. It was explained that the £100k would be provided by the Government when the final Delivery Agreement would be submitted.

It was asked why the Government was asking for a five-year budget but was not funding the plan in full. It was therefore asked what would happen in April if the money was not available and was there any money in reserves that could be used. It was noted that there was an underspend of £140k under the Strategic Planning heading. It was explained that it is not enough but that it could contribute to it. It was highlighted there was underspend in much of the GROWTH funding for the initial stages and therefore there was money in reserve.

The need to keep the levy down in terms of the Councils and the Park was emphasised, especially in the current economic climate.

It was noted that the need to complete this work was statutory and therefore pressure needed to be put on the Government to fund it fairly.

The meeting commenced at 13:30 and concluded at 14:20.

(Chair)