
NORTH WALES CJC ECONOMIC WELL-BEING SUB-COMMITTEE
03/10/2025

Present:

Voting Members - Councillors:- Gary Pritchard (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Nia Jeffreys (Cyngor Gwynedd), Charlie McCoubrey (Conwy County Borough Council), Dave Hughes (Flintshire County Council), Jason McLellan (Denbighshire County Council) and Mark Pritchard (Wrexham County Borough Council).

Co-opted Members (Non-voting) - Professor Paul Spencer (Bangor University) and Professor Joe Yates (Wrexham University).

Chief Officers - Sioned Williams (Cyngor Gwynedd), Sarah Ecob (Conwy County Borough Council), Neal Cockerton (Flintshire County Council), Graham Boase (Denbighshire County Council), Dylan Williams (Isle of Anglesey County Council) and Ian Jones (Wrexham County Borough Council).

Host Authority – Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Sian Pugh (Assistant Head of Finance – Sustainability and Development), Sara Jane Jones (Senior Accountant), Jasmine Jones and Sera Whitley (Democracy Services Officers).

Ambition North Wales - Alwen Williams (Chief Executive of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee), Hedd Vaughan-Evans (Head of Operations), David Hole (Operational Programme Manager), Elliw Hughes (Growth Deal Programme Manager), Stuart Whitfield (Digital Programme Manager), Meghan Davies (Energy and Net Zero Programme Manager) and David Mathews (Land and Property Programme Manager).

Observers - Wendy Boddington (Welsh Government), Gareth Ashman and Alexandra McDonald (UK Government)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:-

- Councillor Edgar Wyn Owen (Eryri National Park).
- Professor Edmund Burke (Bangor University) with Professor Paul Spencer deputising.
- Yana Williams (Coleg Cambria).
- Professor Aled Jones-Griffith (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai).
- David Roberts (Regional Skills Partnership).
- Rhun ap Gareth (Conwy County) with Sarah Ecob deputising.
- Dafydd Gibbard (Cyngor Gwynedd) with Sioned Williams deputising.
- Alwyn Jones (Wrexham County Borough Council) with Ian Jones deputising.
- Dewi Morgan (Cyngor Gwynedd) with Sian Pugh deputising.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

A declaration of personal interest was received from Councillor Jason McLellan for item 8 and item 9. The member did not consider them to be prejudicial interests, and they did not leave the meeting during the discussion.

Declarations of personal interest were received from Professor Joe Yates for item 11 as they were employed by Wrexham University. It was noted that it was a prejudicial interest and they withdrew from the meeting during the discussion.

Declarations of personal interest were received from Councillor Gary Pritchard for item 12, the member did not believe that they were a prejudicial interest, and they did not leave the meeting during the discussion.

3. URGENT ITEMS

Councillor Charlie McCoubrey was thanked for his work on the Sub-committee over the past year, and he was wished well for the future.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 July 2025 as a true record.

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

The report was presented by Sian Pugh.

DECISION

- 1. To note the end of July 2025 revenue review, including the one-off virement in the budget relating to grant income and expenditure.**
- 2. To note the reserves position.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To note a projected underspend of £280,562 against the revenue budget for 2025/26.

DISCUSSION

An estimate review of the 2025/26 revenue position was presented following a review undertaken at the end of July.

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 then as part of the quarter three financial review.

An overview of the Growth Deal's revenue position and the situation for the Shared Prosperity Fund and the Energy grant plans were presented. An estimated underspend of £280k was noted for 2025/26. It was noted that this was mainly due to underspend in employee expenditure, additional government jobs and the support services of the accountable body. Attention was drawn to the success with their Shared Prosperity Fund bid which had further contributed to the underspend in employee expenditure.

It was elaborated that a £177k grant from the Welsh Government for the Energy Scheme and £444k from the Shared Prosperity Fund had been included in the budget under the 'One-off virements' column.

An estimate of the funds' balances on 31 March 2026 was reported. It was elaborated that they anticipated that a loan 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.

It was explained that this had already been reported at the Corporate Joint Committee at its meeting on 19 September.

The members expressed their thanks for the report.

6. QUARTER 1 2025/26 PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT

The report was presented by Hedd Vaughan-Evans, Head of Operations.

RESOLVED

- 1. To note the Quarter 1 Performance Report and updated Portfolio Risk Register.**
- 2. To approve the submission of the Quarter 1 Performance Report to the Welsh Government and UK Government, as well as the local authority scrutiny committees.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Quarterly reporting on progress against the North Wales Growth Deal is one of the requirements of the Final Growth Deal Agreement.

DISCUSSION

The quarter 1 performance report was presented, covering the period between April and June of this year. It was noted that several important milestones had been reached during the period, including the transfer of the Growth Deal work to the CJC. It was reported that a review of the portfolio had been undertaken, with key decisions made on individual projects, and that a new reserves list, as well as the approval and assurance arrangements, had been streamlined and successfully implemented.

Reference was made to the approval of two full business cases during the quarter, namely 4G+ and the Smart Local Energy project. In addition, it was noted that the loan agreement for the Cydnerth project had been completed, the business case for Theatr Clwyd had been approved, and that the main building at Plas Coch, as part of the EEOC project, had been completed with a soft launch, whilst the laboratory facilities at Plas Henfaes had been fully refurbished.

Members were reminded that four projects continued to report a red status currently, and it was noted that they would be part of the second round of the next portfolio review, with proposals and recommendations to be resubmitted to the Board in November. It was noted that many business cases were on this meeting's agenda and that approving them would put the Board in a more positive position in terms of performance.

In terms of benefits, it was noted that the number of jobs created by the end of quarter 1 stood at 38. It was accepted that this figure was not currently significant, but that this reflected the number of projects in the current delivery stage. A significant increase was expected in the coming years as more projects moved to the delivery stage. It was noted that work was underway with the other growth schemes to standardise the process of gathering data on construction posts and ring-fenced posts, in order to be able to provide a more comprehensive picture to the Board and the Government of the impact of the projects.

It was noted that the investment of the Growth Deal by the end of quarter 1 stood slightly over £22.6 million, with the total investment over £24 million. It was further noted that the report also included information about the wider benefits that were emerging, such as additional income secured, students completing qualifications and steps to strengthen supply chains. It was noted that this element would be further developed in future reports as more projects moved to the delivery stage and more data was received about their impact.

In terms of risk, it was noted that the situation was quite consistent with quarter 4 2024/25. It was noted that the residual risk on delay had fallen slightly, as a result of implementing the reserves list. However, it was noted that the residual risk in terms of planning had increased, as some fundamental risks remained in the system and needed to be closely monitored.

It was noted that it was pleasing to see the colours of the risk register improving, however, concern was noted regarding taking this fact out of its context, as the figure of 38 new jobs did not fully reflect the work achieved to date. It was noted that a number of projects were underway showing that the Council was moving towards its targets, and that a mature and robust approach was needed in moving forward with this work.

Concern was expressed regarding the figure of the new posts, namely 38. It was further noted that it was important to explain what these posts were and build this explanation into the dashboard. It was asked whether these were high-quality, full-time posts. It was noted that it was important to aim to create high-value posts to keep people within their communities. In response, it was noted that the 38 posts were full-time equivalent posts and derived from the Bangor University DSP project, Wrexham University EEOC project and full-time posts within the portfolio management office. It was emphasised that more detail would be available in the future regarding the posts created.

Concern was expressed regarding projects without planning permission. It was asked whether it was possible to get an update on the reserves list, especially the Trawsfynydd project. In response, it was noted that planning was a complex process that relied on the decisions of the local authority. It was noted that the reserves list was moving along well, with four of those projects on this meeting's agenda. It was noted, specifically about Trawsfynydd, that the project was proceeding positively, with positive updates received from the team regarding the budget and the governance framework. It was further noted that a workshop would be held at the end of the month for stakeholders involved in the Trawsfynydd project.

The importance of including stronger narratives regarding the posts created over the lifetime of these projects in the long-term was noted, especially in construction. It was further noted that many of these posts would not become operational until the projects had been completed and moved into the implementation phase, causing a delay in the posts' statistics.

The need to re-frame the narrative regarding the posts was emphasised, placing an emphasis on the indirect posts created within local communities and in the supply chains as a result of the Growth Deal. It was agreed that the officers would circulate more information about the posts, especially in terms of the quality of the posts created. It was noted that, unless sufficient information was available, it would be appropriate to revisit the data collection framework in the future to ensure that the relevant information was gathered.

There was a question regarding the timetable for the four projects on the reserves list and due to be presented to this committee in November - officers were asked to confirm that

they were on the right track to do so, as a decision was required regarding whether they should be funded or not. In response, it was confirmed that these four projects were on the right track to be presented to the committee in November.

Everyone was thanked for the discussion and the scrutiny work on the subject. It was emphasised that such scrutiny and challenge was healthy and welcomed.

7. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion on Item 11-14 as it is likely that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 - Information relating to the financial or business transactions of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) will be disclosed.

There is an acknowledged public interest in openness in relation to the use of public resources and related financial issues. However, it is acknowledged that there are occasions, in order to protect financial and commercial interests, that matters related to such information need to be discussed without being publicised. The report relates specifically to financial and business matters and associated discussions. The publication of such commercially sensitive information could adversely affect the interests of the bodies and the Councils and undermine the confidence of other Growth Deal participants in sharing sensitive information for consideration. This would be contrary to the wider public interest of securing the best overall outcome.

8. APPOINTMENT OF NON-EXECUTIVE ADVISORS

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

RESOLVED

To agree on the recommendations noted in section 4.6 to appoint two advisors to the Non-executive Advisors role.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

In March 2025, the Corporate Joint Committee approved the Terms of Reference and the appointment process for a new Business Advisory Board following the transfer of the Growth Deal as well as approving the role descriptions for two new Non-Executive Advisors. The Corporate Joint Committee authorised the interim Chief Executive to take all necessary steps to find candidates to be recommended for appointment to the CJC's Economic Well-being Sub-committee.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

9. FORMER NORTH WALES HOSPITAL - CHANGE REQUEST

The report was presented by David Matthews, Land and Property Programme Manager.

RESOLVED

- 1. To agree to the change request to split the delivery of the Former North Wales Hospital project into two phases with Denbighshire County Council acting as the Project Sponsor**

for Phase 1 Essential Demolition and Remediation Works and Ecological Mitigation Measures and Jones Bros remaining as the Project Sponsor for Phase 2. (The remaining demolition and remediation works, construction of commercial units and conversion of the Main Range Listed Building into apartments and enabling the development of 300 homes).

2. To agree the release of an initial £2m in funding for Phase 1 to Denbighshire County Council with the option of providing a further £1m delegated to the Portfolio Director in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer having regard in particular to the matters in Section 4.3 of the report.
3. To note that the completion of Phase 1 will enable the project to have full visibility of costs associated with Phase 2 and that this could result in a request for further funding but this would be subject to a separate decision in the future if required.
4. To authorise the Portfolio Director in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair, Section 151 and Monitoring Officer to agree and enter into a funding agreement with Denbighshire County Council for Phase 1 subject to completion of the Subsidy Control assessment.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

1. There was a need to progress Phase 1 works imminently in order to provide cost certainty on Phase 2 and to address urgent health and safety matters on site as a result of the deteriorating state of the buildings that needed to be demolished anyway regardless of health and safety matters.
2. By bringing the demolition of these buildings forward, safe access could be achieved to the Main Range Listed Building (MRLB) allowing:
 - i. them to be inspected to obtain up-to-date assessments of conversion costs, viability of the overall project etc.
 - ii. Any urgent works can be carried out to the MRLB to limit any further deterioration in its structural integrity
 - iii. momentum/confidence to be built in the project in terms of the other milestones that needed to be achieved.
3. All parties have agreed that the clearance of the buildings to be demolished should be the priority. Whilst these works were ongoing, negotiations regarding the content of the S106 relating to giving planning permission would continue.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

10. PROJECT PRINCE OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE

The report was presented by Elliw Hughes, Growth Deal Programme Manager.

RESOLVED

1. To approve the Outline Business Case (OBC) for Project Prince subject to Welsh Government and UK Government approval of the assurance process undertaken, and Knauf Insulation Limited addressing the matters set out in the report, as described in Section 7, and request that a Full Business Case is prepared for the Sub-committee to consider.
2. To authorise the Portfolio Director in consultation with the Chair, Vice-chair, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to agree draft terms in accordance with this report as a basis for the final funding arrangements for the project to be entered into subject to Full Business Case approval.

3. That the approval from the Sub-committee is valid for a period of twelve months and should the project not proceed to an approved FBC during this time, it will be required to return and re-present the business case to the Sub-committee for approval.
4. To note the intention to split the funding between the Growth Deal and Investment Zone (once approved) and that this position will be confirmed at Full Business Case stage.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

1. To seek the Sub-committee's approval of the Outline Business Case for Project Prince by Knauf Insulation Limited.
2. A decision to approve the Outline Business Case by the Economic Well-being Sub-committee would enable Knauf to progress to the next stage of their internal approvals.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

11. SOCIETY 5.0 MANUFACTURING AND BUSINESS CAPABILITY PROJECT - BUSINESS JUSTIFICATION CASE PLUS (BJC+)

The report was presented by Elliw Hughes, Growth Deal Programme Manager.

RESOLVED

1. To approve the Business Justification Case (BJC+) for the Society 5.0 Manufacturing and Business Capability Project, subject to Welsh Government and UK Government approval of the assurance process undertaken.
2. To delegate to the Portfolio Director in consultation with the Chair, Vice-chair, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to confirm the final costs and benefits post procurement are in line with the approved business case and enter into a funding agreement with Wrexham University for the delivery of the project, subject to Wrexham University addressing the outstanding issues set out in section 7 of the report and securing all necessary internal approvals for the project.
3. To ensure that approval from the Sub-committee is valid for a period of six months and should the project not proceed to a signed funding agreement during this time, it will be required to return and re-present the business case to the Sub-committee for approval.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To seek the Sub-committee's approval of the Business Justification Case for the Society 5.0 Manufacturing and Business Capability Project.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

12. NORTH ANGLESEY SITES AND PREMISES PROJECT - BUSINESS JUSTIFICATION CASE+

The report was presented by David Matthews, Land and Property Programme Manager.

RESOLVED

1. To approve the Business Justification Case (BJC+) for the North Anglesey Sites and Premises project, subject to Welsh Government and UK Government approval of the assurance process undertaken.
2. To delegate to the Portfolio Director in consultation with the Chair, Vice-chair, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to confirm the final costs and benefits post procurement were in line with the approved business case and enter into a funding agreement with Isle of Anglesey County Council (IoACC) for the delivery of the project, subject to Isle of Anglesey County Council addressing the outstanding issues set out in section 7 of the report and securing all necessary internal approvals for the project.
3. To ensure that approval from the Sub-committee is valid for a period of six months and should the project not proceed to a signed funding agreement during this time, it will be required to return and re-present the business case to the Sub-committee for approval.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To seek the Sub-committee's approval of the BJC+ for the North Anglesey Sites and Premises project.

The draft BJC+ is being presented to the Sub-committee in October to enable the Council to enter into a Joint Venture Agreement with Welsh Government prior to instigating formal procurement to appoint a Main Contractor for both sites included in the project. Procurement for the project is currently due to commence in Q4 2025 with a Preferred bidder selection confirmed for the Marine Terminal Building and the new business units in Q1 2026.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

13. FREEPORT GATEWAY PROJECT - BUSINESS JUSTIFICATION CASE+

The report was presented by David Matthews, Land and Property Programme Manager.

RESOLVED

1. To approve the Business Justification Case (BJC+) for the Freeport Gateway project, subject to Welsh Government and UK Government approval of the assurance process undertaken.
2. To delegate to the Portfolio Director in consultation with the Chair, Vice-chair, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to confirm the final costs and benefits post procurement were in line with the approved business case and enter into a funding agreement with Isle of Anglesey County Council (IoACC) for the delivery of the project, subject to Isle of Anglesey County Council addressing the outstanding issues set out in section 7 of the report and securing all necessary internal approvals for the project.
3. That the approval from the Sub-committee is valid for a period of six months and should the project not proceed to a signed funding agreement during this time, it

will be required to return and re-present the business case to the Sub-committee for approval.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To seek the Sub-Committee's approval of the BJC+ for the Freeport Gateway project.

The draft BJC+ is being presented to the Sub-Committee in October in order for IoACC to complete the purchase of the freehold interest of the site from Eastman. As the site has substantial liabilities, IoACC wish to have certainty that they will have sufficient funding to address the demolition, remediation and other site clearance works as well as providing for an adoptable highway for accessing the site. As part of the wider Freeport Gateway project, IoACC wish to construct additional employment units on the adjacent Tregarnedd Industrial Park and to bring forward a development plot for sale on the open market.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

The meeting started at 09:30 and ended at 12:00.

Chair