EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE NORTH WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE 09/10/26

Attendance:

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

Councillors: Dave Hughes (Flintshire County Council), Nia Jeffreys (Cyngor Gwynedd), Gary Pritchard (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Julie Fallon (Conwy County Borough Council), Hugh Evans (Denbighshire County Council), and Ifor Glyn Lloyd (Chair of Eryri National Park Authority).

Chief Executives of Constituent Councils: David Fitzsimon (Flintshire County Council), Gary Williams (Denbighshire County Council), and Dylan Williams (Isle of Anglesey County Council).

Other officers present: Alwen Williams (Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) Chief Executive), Sian Pugh (Assistant Head of Finance – Cyngor Gwynedd), Mark Watkins (Head of Legal Services / Interim Monitoring Officer – Ambition North Wales), Helen Edwards (Deputy Monitoring Officer – Ambition North Wales), David Hole (Corporate Joint Committee Implementation Programme Manager), Ffion Williams (Senior Operations Officer – Ambition North Wales), Lowri Evans (Democracy Services Officer – Cyngor Gwynedd), and Sera Whitley (Democracy Services Officer – Cyngor Gwynedd).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

- Rhun ap Gareth and Jenny Williams (Conwy County Borough Council)
- Helen White (Denbighshire County Council) with Gary Williams deputising
- Neal Cockerton (Flintshire County Council) with David Fitzsimon deputising
- Dafydd Gibbard (Cyngor Gwynedd)
- Jonathan Cawley (Eryri National Park Authority)
- Dewi Morgan (Chief Finance Officer – Cyngor Gwynedd)
- Hedd Vaughan-Evans (Portfolio Director – Ambition North Wales)

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

The report was presented by Alwen Williams, Chief Executive.

RESOLVED:

The Annual Report for 2025/26 was approved.

DISCUSSION

It was reported that the Annual Report 2025/26 provides an overview of a significant year for the CJC and for Ambition North Wales. It was noted that progress has been made in key functions and it also reported the appointment of a full-time Chief Executive, a Portfolio Director, non-executive advisors, and dedicated Transport and Planning leads.

Progress was highlighted, including: the approval of the Regional Transport Plan; progress of the Strategic Development Plan's Delivery Agreement; the launch of the Flint and Wrexham Investment Zone; continued delivery of the North Wales Growth Deal; the work of the Regional Skills Partnership; the work of the Strategic Energy Team; and delivery of Regional Shared Prosperity Fund projects.

Achievements were reported for the benefit of members. It was noted that seven Growth Deal projects were in delivery for 2025/26, and a further ten projects have been approved and are currently progressing. It was confirmed that the Growth Deal has created 121 jobs and has delivered £34.21 million of investment to the North Wales economy. Strong local procurement outcomes were also highlighted, noting that 86% of Growth Deal procurement had been awarded to companies located in North Wales.

It was confirmed that approval of the report will allow the CJC to demonstrate transparency and accountability in how it has discharged its functions during 2025/26.

It was highlighted that it is crucial to ensure value for money regardless of where in North Wales the procurement is coming from, especially given that public money is being spent.

5. TRANSFORMATION AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE

The report was presented by Alwen Williams, Chief Executive and Dave Hole, Programme Lead.

RESOLVED:

The progress and challenges of the 2026/27 programme were identified.

In the context of transformation and change, that the CJC should not meet the costs of any additional roles, functions, or responsibilities conferred on it from its own financial resources.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that the Programme continues to support the ongoing development of the CJC as a fully operational body following the transfer of the Growth Deal, its funding and its employees, into the organisation. It is stressed that this is a multi-year programme that is designed to build on the CJC's operating model, governance, capacity, systems, and corporate arrangements in order to deliver its statutory duties and powers.

It was reported that since the last update, positive progress has continued across a wide range of areas including corporate capacity, legal and governance arrangements, finance, IT, HR, operations, policy, procurement, transport, and planning. Key achievements were also highlighted, such as the appointment of a Portfolio Director, appointment of a Head of PMO Delivery, progress of the constitutional review, delivery of audit plans, delivery of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, publication of the Pay Policy, progress of the Service Level Agreement, and the development of a number of key corporate policies and arrangements.

It was noted that the Transformation and Improvement Programme remains a challenging programme. Notably, it was reported that capacity remains limited and the organisation is trying to balance transformation activity alongside day-to-day operational delivery. A number of constraints were listed, including ongoing dependencies on partner support, budget constraints, recruitment constraints, system changes, and the Service Level Agreement not being formally completed.

It was confirmed that a list of priority work is in place for the remainder of the year, alongside a reserve list which may be progressed if capacity allows or otherwise carried forward into 2027/28. It was stressed that this reflects the need to take an agile but realistic approach to delivery whilst continuing to build the foundations of the organisation.

It was noted that should any additional responsibilities, roles or functions arise from any new or emerging legislation, the CJC should ensure that it is not expected to meet the costs from its own financial resources.

6. NORTH WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE PETITION SCHEME

The report was presented by Helen Edwards, Deputy Monitoring Officer.

RESOLVED:

The Petition Scheme was approved.

DISCUSSION

It was reported that the CJC is obliged to establish and publish a Petition Scheme, as it sets out how individuals can raise issues with the CJC. It was explained that the Scheme also sets out who can raise a petition, how it will be considered, what it should contain, and the steps the CJC may take in response to a petition.

It was questioned what steps would be taken to promote the Scheme, given that some members of the public are unaware of the existence of the CJC and Ambition North Wales. It was confirmed that the Scheme will be promoted on the Ambition North Wales website, but it was also acknowledged that work is required as to how the public can be made more aware of the organisation as a whole. It was stressed that Ambition North Wales are working hard with the resources they currently have available to raise awareness of the work and responsibilities of the CJC, and this includes daily networking on social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn. However, it was acknowledged that as a relatively new organisation, this work takes time and it is possible that they have been unable to reach every community across North Wales.

It was highlighted that the Leaders of the local authorities have their own media platforms and could offer further support in promoting the work of the CJC. It was confirmed that the Chief Executive of Ambition North Wales would have a discussion with the Chief Executives and Leaders of the local authorities as to how they can offer this support, particularly given how important it is to promote this Scheme.

It was further acknowledged that Ambition North Wales has its own Communications Officer who is in regular contact with the communication teams at each local authority, and that perhaps this existing relationship could be used to expand networking opportunities.

It was confirmed that this would be a positive step, and that consideration should be given to developing a communication plan or communication strategy with regards to publicising the

Petition Scheme. However, it was noted that some members of the public are not on social media platforms and that consideration should be given to reach all individuals.

7. ESTABLISHMENT OF A STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE

The report was presented by Helen Edwards, Deputy Monitoring Officer.

RESOLVED:

The Terms of Reference for the Standards Sub-committee were agreed.

It was agreed that the constituent authorities and the National Park Authority would be asked to nominate members of the sub-committee as set out in paragraph 4.5 below.

It was agreed that the CJC would conduct a public external recruitment campaign as required, and that the constituent authorities would be notified so that they could alert the independent members of their Standards Committees in case any of them are eligible and interested in applying.

The timetable and recruitment process for Independent Members were agreed as set out in paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7 of the report, and the Monitoring Officer was authorised to a) amend it if necessary and b) establish and appoint an appointment panel in accordance with regulation 15 of the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations 2001, as amended.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, and the layout of the Sub-committee was set out for the members. It was noted that the Sub-committee will be made up of independent members and council members, with independent members making up the majority. It was reported that constituent authorities will be asked to nominate both council members and independent members for the Sub-committee, but that the CJC is also obliged to advertise externally for independent members.

The recruitment timetable and process were set out, and it was noted that the timescales will need to be amended as some of the timescales have already slipped. It was confirmed that the Monitoring Officer will amend these timescales as required.

In response to a question regarding why constituent authorities will offer nominations for independent members in the first instance, it was explained that discussions with the monitoring officer from each constituent council had indicated that nominating independent members from their own constituent council's standards committees would speed up the process and ensure members who had relevant experience. However, it was stressed that the CJC is under obligation to advertise externally for independent members alongside seeking nominations from constituent councils. It was explained that a selection process will be required should the CJC receive more nominations than needed.

It was clarified that a reasonable amount of time, at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer, will be allowed for nominations to be received and should no nominations be received, the nomination process will be reconsidered. The importance of advertising as widely as possible was stressed.

8. CJC SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP CHANGES AND LAY MEMBER APPOINTMENT

The report was presented by Mark Watkins, Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that Councillor Hugh Evans, as Leader of Denbighshire County Council, was a member of the CJC and its Economic Well-being Sub-committee by virtue of that office.

The appointments of the Monitoring Officer were noted under the delegation dated 21 June 2024, namely Councillor James Elson to the Strategic Transport Sub-committee and Councillor Geraint Lloyd Williams to the Strategic Planning Sub-committee.

Dewi Lewis was appointed as a lay member of the Governance and Audit Sub-committee for a period of four years from the effective date of appointment, subject to completion of the relevant co-option agreement.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, confirming that it relates to recent changes to membership of the CJC itself and its Sub-committees following changes at Denbighshire County Council, as well as the appointment of a replacement lay member to the CJC Governance and Audit Sub-committee.

It was reported that Councillor Hugh Evans is the new leader of Denbighshire County Council and therefore automatically becomes a member of both the CJC and the Economic Wellbeing Sub-committee. It was also confirmed that Councillor James Elson had been appointed to the CJC Strategic Transport Sub-committee and Councillor Geraint Lloyd Williams had been appointed to the CJC Strategic Planning Sub-committee, following portfolio changes at Denbighshire County Council.

It was reported the Dewi Lewis had been nominated by Cyngor Gwynedd's Governance and Audit Committee, following a vacancy arising from the resignation of a previous lay member. Members were informed that, unlike the appointments mentioned above, this appointment requires formal appointment by the CJC. It was also noted that Dewi Lewis's CV had been shared confidentially with members prior to the meeting but that if they wished to discuss the CV the meeting would have to move into part two.

Welcomes were extended to Councillor Hugh Evans, and it was confirmed that members were content with the nomination that had been put forward and did not wish to discuss the CV in further detail.

The meeting commenced at 09:30 and concluded at 10:05

_____

(Chair)