

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

19 JANUARY 2021

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEES

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with an update regarding Corporate Joint Committees which are an integral feature of the Local Government and Election (Wales) Bill.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-
1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
 2. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill was passed by the Senedd on 18th November 2020 and will receive Royal Assent in January 2021. It is a substantial piece of legislation covering electoral reform, public participation, governance and performance and regional working.
- 3.2 The new approach as set out in the Bill is designed to be a more streamlined, flexible, sector-led approach to performance, good governance and improvement. The intention is for councils to be proactive in considering how internal processes and procedures should change to enable more effective planning, delivery and decision making to drive better outcomes.
- 3.3 A report will be presented to Council on 20th January 2021 providing an update on the Bill and an Action Plan to ensure that the Council is prepared for when the Bill comes into force.

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 The establishment of Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) is an integral feature of the Bill, currently going through the Senedd Committee process. The Bill

introduces:

- Powers for councils to initiate the establishment of CJs covering any functions;
- Powers for Welsh Ministers to establish CJs covering the four functions of economic wellbeing, transport, strategic planning and school improvement.

4.2 CJs have a role to play in bringing coherence to regional governance, strengthening local democracy and accountability by integrating decision making. There are proposed to be four regional CJs across Wales covering South East Wales, South West Wales, Mid Wales, and North Wales with the goal to build wherever possible on existing regional arrangements. The wider purpose is to share resources and ensure all local priorities and requirements can be complemented by regional action, ensuring a sense of consistency, harmony and resilience permeates regional public investment, planning and accountability. The four CJs will be established to exercise three related functions that are:

- Strategic Development Plan;
- Regional Transport Planning and creation of a Regional Transport Plan;
- Economic Development and Wellbeing.

Welsh Government consider that these are areas where there is consensus that working at this scale makes sense – aligning economic development, transport and land use planning approaches to develop successful regional economies and encourage local growth.

4.3 The specific functions of a CJs and how it will be governed are set out in draft Corporate Joint Committee Regulations which have recently been consulted on by Welsh Government with the consultation closing 4th January 2021. The final regulations are expected by April 2021. This includes regulations for each of the four proposed CJs: North Wales; Mid Wales; South East Wales and South West Wales.

4.5 Under the draft regulations, the new CJs will exercise the functions of preparing, monitoring, reviewing and revising of a Strategic Development Plan and development of a Regional Transport Plan. The regulations further provide that CJs:

- operation in practice should be left to the members of the CJC;
- CJs will be subject to the same powers and duties as principal councils;
- will be made up of Leaders, though they can co-opt other members;
- will be established on a 'one member one vote' basis, however, once established, a CJC could adopt alternative voting procedures;
- will have powers delegated to it and will make timely decisions without the need for ratification by its constituent principal councils;
- will be accountable to its constituent principal councils and members will report back to those principal councils and must respond to questions and scrutiny;
- can set up sub-committees to lead on specific functions and can agree other members (such as cabinet members or co-optees);
- must appoint a Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer and Chief Governance Officer (this could be provided by a constituent authority, or via secondment);

- shall set up an Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- CJs will likely be bound by legislation such as the Equality Act 2010, Welsh Language and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act;
- CJs to decide whether sub-committees are required, and who sits on them.

4.6 It is expected that the Cardiff Capital Region Cabinet (CCRC) and staffing structure will transform into the South East Wales CJC. The CCRC is an existing and experienced Joint Cabinet Committee and this is the fundamental starting point for a strategy. The key feature of the CCRC approach is the strength of a Regional Cabinet model which has Leaders (comprising the ten Leaders of Blaenau Gwent; Bridgend; Caerphilly; Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taff; Torfaen; and Vale of Glamorgan) recurrently coming together to make decisions in the best interests of the region. It is believed that the potential benefits are strong with the maturity of what has already been built, continually developing confidence, trust and consensus. It is therefore an adjustment to existing provisions and the opportunity for greater powers and levers at regional level.

4.7 A report was presented to the CCRC on 7th December 2020 setting out proposed principles of the approach of CCRC in respect of the CJs agenda and providing:

- A framework for building a City Region and good governance, partnerships, accountability and proposals for new regional institutional capacity;
- The roadmap for transition and sequencing of inter-related elements;
- Interaction and engagement across the UK, Welsh Government, regional and local government;
- The key ingredients of a positive sum game – local, regional and national;
- Illustrations of a functional model of regionalism in CCR whilst maintaining and building upon the integrity of the current set-up and the benefits of CJs without additional layers of bureaucracy and complexity;
- A focus on evolution and enhancement through the ability to more closely link national, regional and local; ensuring Wales can better compete on a national stage and in international markets; and,
- A focus in more resources and ‘bigger bets’ to lever real economic impact.

4.8 The proposed appropriate next steps at this time, subject to further discussion with Welsh Government and necessary CCRC approval are:

- Focussed regional discussions pertaining to existing context, maturity levels and ease of concurrence;
- To establish a resource package for the initial transition;
- Creating a legal framework for transition;
- Establishing a Transition Advisory Plan and structures to develop and operationalise the Transition Plan;
- Development of a Stakeholder Engagement Plan;
- Joint Working Agreement to be reviewed and revalidated and the new frameworks to be operational.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

5.1 None directly applicable to this report.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 An EIA has not been undertaken at this stage. Welsh Government have produced an integrated assessment.

7. Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. As the report is for information only it is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report. Elements of the Bill will however have a positive impact on the five ways of working under the Act.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications at this time but further work will however be required to understand the resourcing of CJs.

8.2 Welsh Government has committed to providing support and funding for some aspects of the Bill's implementation, including £500,000 to support digital democracy and potential set-up costs to support CJs.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet note and endorse the report.

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January 2021

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Background documents: None.