

Report to	Cabinet
Date of meeting	14 th December 2021
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Hugh Evans, Leader Graham Boase, Chief Executive
Report author	Gary Williams, Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services
Title	Establishment of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee

1. What is the report about?

1.1. The report is about the arrangements to be made for the establishment of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee ('the CJC').

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. To inform members of the arrangements which need to be made in respect of the establishment of the CJC and to seek approval in principle for the transfer of the functions of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board to the CJC by means of a delegation agreement.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1. That Cabinet agrees in principle that the functions of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board be transferred by way of a delegation agreement to the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee on condition;

- a) that the statutory framework that the Welsh Government are developing allows for the delegation of the relevant executive functions to a Corporate Joint Committee,

- b) that the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee agrees to establishment of a Sub-Committee, with membership to be agreed with the Councils, to undertake the functions of the Economic Ambition Board.

This transition is proposed in order to achieve a streamlined governance model, avoiding duplication. A further detailed report on the framework for implementation will be presented to a subsequent meeting of the Cabinet.

4. Report details

- 4.1. The North Wales Corporate Joint Committees Regulations 2021 created the CJC with effect from 1st April 2021.
- 4.2. The CJC has the functions of preparing a Strategic Development Plan and a Regional Transport Plan. It also has a broad economic well-being power. The CJC is required to exercise these functions from 30th June 2022.
- 4.3. The report attached as Appendix 1 to this report is a standard report which is to be considered by the Cabinet or Executive equivalent of each of the six North Wales principal councils at their respective meetings in December 2021.
- 4.4. The purpose of the report contained in Appendix 1 is to set out the arrangements which need to be made to ensure that the CJC is properly established and in a position to exercise its functions by 30th June 2022. These include the requirement for the CJC to set a budget for financial year 2022/23 by no later than 31st January 2022.
- 4.5. Appendix 1 also sets out the rationale for the proposed transfer of the functions of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board ('the EAB') to the CJC by means of a delegation agreement. The proposal is that the functions of the EAB would be delegated to a sub-committee of the CJC.
- 4.6. This transition is proposed in order to take advantage of the fact that the CJC, unlike the EAB, is a separate corporate entity which is able to enter into legal agreements in its own right. The proposed model is intended to provide a streamlined model of governance avoiding duplication and convoluted back to back legal agreements.

- 4.7. Appendix 1 sets out the principles which have been agreed by Chief Executives and Leaders as the basis upon which any transition should be implemented.
- 4.8. The decision sought by this report is an in principle decision which is dependent upon the Welsh Government developing an appropriate legislative framework to allow the delegation of the functions of the EAB to the CJC. The Welsh Government is developing further regulations and statutory guidance relating to the operation of CJsCs and it is important that these provide the necessary statutory basis upon which the proposed transition may proceed.
- 4.9. In the meantime, a Welsh Government grant of £250K has been provided to the region for the purpose of enhanced project management capacity and commissioning professional assistance (including external legal advice) to support implementation of, and transition to the CJC. This work is being led by Gwynedd County Council on behalf of the region and is being overseen by the Chief Executives and Leaders.
- 4.10. Further reports will be brought to Cabinet in respect of the establishment of the CJC in due course.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

- 5.1. The functions of the CJC are consistent with the Council's priorities for economic prosperity and connected communities

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 6.1. The costs of the establishment of the CJC and the transition of the EAB to the CJC are proposed to be covered by the grant of £250K which has been provided to the region by Welsh Government. The in principle decision sought by this report will not have any direct financial costs. There will however be ongoing administrative costs associated with the administration of the CJC and the implementation of its functions. The CJC will be required to set a budget for financial year 2022/23 by 31st January 2022 and agree the contribution to be made by each of the local authorities.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. A well-being assessment has not been prepared in respect of this in principle decision. An assessment will be prepared before final consideration of the matter.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. There has not been a specific consultation with Scrutiny. There have been member workshops to discuss the proposals to create CJs as these emerged through the legislative process and in respect of the draft statutory guidance issued by Welsh Government in respect of the operation of the CJC.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. The direct financial consequences are set out clearly in Section 6. It should be noted that the initial budget is still yet to be agreed but is likely to include the core governance functions/posts which will not be too onerous. I am confident that corporate funding will be available to fund this initial contribution. However, it will be vitally important that officers and Members ensure that value for money is maintained when additional functions and responsibilities are transferred to the CJC which is likely to increase Local Authorities' contributions going forward.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. There is a risk that if the EAB is not transferred into the CJC it will not be able to take advantage of the more streamlined governance model that the CJC offers. This could lead to regional duplication, increased costs and increased pressure on capacity to serve both bodies.

10.2. There is a risk that the emerging legislative framework does not adequately provide for the sort of delegation agreement that is envisaged for the EAB.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. There is currently no power to delegate the functions of the EAB to the CJC. It is anticipated that this will form part of the legislative framework being developed by Welsh Government, hence the in principle nature of the decision sought.