

<b>Report to</b>	<b>Democratic Services Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>22 March 2024</b>
<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Steve Price, Democratic Services Manager</b>
<b>Head of Service</b>	<b>Catrin Roberts, Head of Support Service: People</b>
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<b>Title</b>	<b>Regional Scrutiny Arrangements</b>

## **1. What is the report about?**

- 1.1. To provide information on how local authority Scrutiny arrangements are applied to regional public service delivery.

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

- 2.1. To comply with the Committee's request and provide information on how local authority scrutiny arrangements apply to regional public service delivery and how various regional bodies or sub-regional bodies are currently scrutinised.

## **3. What are the Recommendations?**

- 3.1 That the Committee considers and discusses the information provided.

## **4. Report details**

- 4.1. This report provides an overview of the various scrutiny arrangements currently in place, or being proposed, for the regional/sub-regional public service bodies that are directly associated with local authorities across the North Wales region.
- 4.2. With local authorities for the foreseeable future attempting to balance increased demand for services against reducing resources regional management of public

service delivery may well come to the fore. In addition, Welsh Government (WG) has directed that specific areas of service delivery should be guided by regional plans, hence its decision to establish Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs). These factors reinforce the need for local authorities to have robust scrutiny arrangements in place to safeguard the delivery of high-quality regionally co-ordinated services in their local areas.

4.3. Regionalisation of service delivery is not a new concept. North Wales Police and North Wales Fire Service (later North Wales Fire and Rescue Service) were both created as part of earlier local government reorganisations. Whilst further local government reorganisation is not currently being proposed a number of regional public service bodies already exist with the aim of creating synergies between various organisations, avoiding duplication, and reducing service delivery costs.

4.4. On a strategic level there are currently a number of boards or services that operate on a regional or sub-regional footprint. Similar to other authorities Denbighshire contributes to the work of these bodies. Regionally, the main ones at present are:

- GwE (Regional School Improvement Service)
- North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB)
- North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC)
- North Wales Regional Partnership Board (NWRPB)
- North Wales Residual Waste Joint Committee
- North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent (NWMTRA)

#### Sub-regionally

- Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board (PSB)
- Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Joint Committee

4.5 As these are public service delivery bodies it is appropriate that their activities and decisions are appropriately understood and transparent to the wider community. Local authority scrutiny committees have an important role in engaging members and the public in regional service delivery and in providing challenge and accountability measures where necessary.

4.6 The Regulations or Agreements that established the above bodies stipulate that they are required to be democratically accountable to their constituent authorities via scrutiny. Whilst the Regulations or Agreements establishing the NWEAB and the PSB stipulate that each local authority is required to designate a specific scrutiny committee to scrutinise these bodies, the scrutiny arrangements for them vary across the region. The table in Appendix 1 provides an overview of the current scrutiny arrangements for GwE, NWEAB, the CJC and PSBs across the region .

### **Denbighshire's current arrangements**

4.7 **Regional School Improvement Service (GwE):** At present GwE officials attend Scrutiny (predominantly Performance Scrutiny Committee) with Education Service officers at the Committee's invitation to discuss school support and performance related matters. Further information can be found in Appendix 1.

4.8 **North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) :** Quarterly and annual reporting to Scrutiny on progress against the North Wales Growth Deal is a requirement of the Final Deal Agreement. As part of the final deal agreement all six local authorities agreed a 'Scrutiny Protocol' whereby regular updates on the work of the NWEAB are submitted to each authority's 'relevant' scrutiny Committee. Denbighshire has designated Partnerships Scrutiny Committee as its 'relevant' scrutiny committee for this purpose. Consequently, Partnerships Scrutiny Committee receives the NWEAB's Quarters 1, 2 and 3 performance reports for information and then the Quarter 4 and Annual Report are formally presented to the Committee by the Council Leader (DCC's representative on the NWEAB) and officers from the Board's Portfolio Management Office. The above mentioned 'Scrutiny Protocol' also includes an agreed approach for dealing with a 'Call-In.'

As 'economic well-being' is one of the powers vested in the new North Wales CJC there has been some discussion around transferring the functions of the NWEAB to the CJC. This would involve the NWEAB becoming a sub-committee of the CJC. Each of the six local authorities have approved this change in principle, however, these arrangements are yet to be confirmed and any change will have to be approved by members. Scrutiny arrangements for

the NWEAB in Denbighshire, like elsewhere, will continue in their current guise until the position is clarified.

**4.9 North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC):** The Welsh Government created the North Wales CJC under the North Wales Corporate Joint Committees Regulations 2021. It came into being on 1 April 2021 and was required to make arrangements to deliver its functions from 30 June 2022. The CJC is a high-level strategic body which has powers conferred on it in relation to:

- developing a strategic regional transport plan
- developing a strategic development plan; and
- securing the broad economic well-being of the region

The membership of the CJC comprises representatives from the six local authorities and Eryri National Park (ENP). ENP members only have voting rights on the CJC in relation to developing its Strategic Development Plan.

Work on developing scrutiny arrangements and a scrutiny framework for the CJC are currently underway. These arrangements could include the creation of a Joint North Wales Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC). Further information will be provided as these arrangements develop.

**4.10 North Wales Residual Waste Joint Committee:** this Board consists of representatives from all North Wales local authorities, except Wrexham County Borough Council. It was established to create a strategy and procure services for jointly disposing of residual waste. There are currently no regular scrutiny arrangements in place in Denbighshire for this joint committee.

**4.11 North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent (NMWTRA):** this agent manages, maintains and delivers improvements on the strategic road network in North and Mid Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government. It operates on the basis of a partnership between the 8 North and Mid Wales local authorities. There are currently no regular scrutiny arrangements in place in Denbighshire for NMWTRA.

**4.12 Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board (PSB):** Section 58 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and Regulation 3 of The Local Authorities (Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2013 makes provision for two or more local authorities by agreement to

establish a joint scrutiny committee. Conwy County Borough Council and Denbighshire County Council both agreed to establish a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) for the purposes of scrutinising and complying with duties conferred on Scrutiny in relation to PSBs under the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015. The JOSC meets twice a year at present.

Whilst there is one other joint PSB in North Wales and the other two have developed a joint Well-being Plan, Conwy and Denbighshire are the only counties who have established a JOSC. A JOSC operates in exactly the same way as any local authority scrutiny committee and has call-in powers which can be instigated if required.

### **Other regional and sub-regional bodies or boards subject to scrutiny in Denbighshire**

4.13 There are a number of other regional or sub-regional bodies in existence which are scrutinised on a regular basis in Denbighshire. These are:

**Conwy & Denbighshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP)** – this Committee attends Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on at least an annual basis in accordance with the requirements of sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006. Each local authority is required under this Act to have a designated Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee.

**North Wales Regional Partnership Board (NWRPB)** – The NWRPB is one of 7 boards established across Wales to bring together local authorities, local health boards, third sector, service users and carers to co-operate together in planning and delivering services in relation to adults with needs for care and support, carers and children. Regional Partnership Boards operate on the footprints of each of the seven Health Boards in Wales. In Denbighshire, the Board's Annual Report is presented to Partnerships Scrutiny Committee.

4.14 In addition, other regional arrangements do exist which can be invited in for scrutiny at any time if members feel that aspects of their work would benefit from being scrutinised. These include the **North Wales Safeguarding Board (NWSB)** and the **North Wales Counties Regional Emergency Planning Service (NWC-REPS)**. Neither of the above named are currently subject to regular scrutiny in Denbighshire.

## **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?**

5.1. Effective partnership working is key if the Council is to realise its ambition of delivering its Corporate Plan. Scrutiny has a crucial role to play in building relationships with partner organisations with a view to realising value for money and securing the delivery of high-quality services for local residents.

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

6.1. There are no direct costs arising from the production of this report. Any costs associated with supporting scrutiny of public service delivery will need to be considered as part of the establishment costs if and when any regional arrangements are proposed.

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

7.1. Not applicable as no decision is required.

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

8.1. Not applicable as this report is for the Committee's information.

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

9.1. Not required.

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

10.1. No risks have been identified in relation to the production of this report.

However, scrutiny is a key component of effective decision-making, therefore it is imperative that all public service delivery arrangements, be they on a local authority area basis, a sub-regional or regional basis are effectively held to account via a robust scrutiny mechanism.

## **11. Power to make the decision**

11.1. No decision required. The legislative basis for the areas covered in this report include Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000, Section 58 of the Local

Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and Regulation 3 of The Local Authorities  
(Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2013.