

MEETING: **North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (the CJC)**
DATE: **22 July 2022**
SUBJECT: **ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND STAFFING**
CONTACT OFFICER: **Dafydd Gibbard, the CJC's Chief Executive, and
Dafydd L Edwards, CJC Project Lead Officer**

DECISIONS SOUGHT:

To submit a request to the North Wales Economic Ambition Board to release part of their Portfolio Director's time to fulfil the role of the CJC's Chief Executive, on a temporary basis.

1. Introduction

This report deals with appointment of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee's acting Chief Executive (CJC), and postpone any movement to employ staff to carry out the Planning and Transport duties for now.

2. Options Appraisal for the CJC's Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

At its meeting on 17 June 2022, the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee re-appointed Dafydd Gibbard as the CJC's Chief Executive, on an acting basis effective until the position is reviewed again by the CJC.

The CJC's Chief Finance Officer (s151) and the CJC's Monitoring Officer (MO) role are also being provided by Gwynedd Council. This, of course, ensures alignment with the EAB arrangements and there is a clear argument for the s151 and MO role to continue in this way (as it is probable that the NW Economic Ambition Board will transition into the NW CJC, possibly on 01/04/2023).

However, those arguments don't apply to the Chief Executive role, and the options for filling that role on a temporary basis include –

Option A - Creating a stand-alone post as Chief Executive of the CJC –

CJC members have sought to deliver value for money in establishing the CJC, when agreeing on a minimum budget approach to the whole CJC set-up in 2022/23. That has effectively led to this option being disregarded.

Option B - Formally appointing one of the 6 local authority Chief Executives as the CJC's Chief Executive.

This has proven to be difficult, given insufficient availability of time required to oversee the organisational (establishing systems and identity), political (post-election leadership) and staffing (line management for Strategic Planning and Regional Transport posts) developments.

Reappointment of Dafydd Gibbard (Gwynedd's Chief Executive) as the CJC's Chief Executive on a temporary basis was the only pragmatic solution for the interim period between June and September 2022.

Option C - Extending the role of Ambition North Wales' Portfolio Director (the North Wales Economic Ambition Board's chief officer) to include (part time) the CJC Chief Executive role as well.

Bearing in mind the likelihood that the EAB will soon be incorporated as part of the CJC, this is the 6 local authorities Chief Executives' preferred option, following consideration over a period of time.

The 6 North Wales local authority Leaders sit on both the Ambition Board and the CJC, and the model of drawing on the expertise of the Portfolio Director is being adopted in the Cardiff Capital Region for their CJC.

Also, the CJC Chief Executive could effectively be the 'client' for Gwynedd Council's support services, building on the excellent working relationship that already exists.

This Option would require approval by the Ambition Board. A number of aspects would need to be addressed from the perspective of the Ambition Board, such as 'back-filling' part of the Portfolio Director's role to create the necessary capacity.

The CJC will need to provide a temporary financial contribution to the EAB in order to give them the flexibility to make whatever internal adjustments they may need in order to continue to deliver the Growth Program effectively.

The Welsh Government is still engaging with HM Treasury on the timing of Orders which will solve the CJC's VAT status (the ability to claim a refund of VAT incurred), and the CJC's access to borrowing (from the PWLB at a low interest rate), but it is expected that there will be clarity "later in 2022, possibly in the autumn".

This means that possible transfer of the Ambition Board's functions to the CJC is by now much more likely, as the Westminster Government's agencies begin to move on the tax and borrowing issues. All of this supports the rationale for bringing the Ambition Board's leader more central to discussions establishing the CJC.

RECOMMENDATION

Recognising the implications of the developing CJC for Ambition North Wales, that the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee submit a request to the North Wales Economic Ambition Board to release part of their Portfolio Director's time to fulfil the role of the CJC's Chief Executive, on a temporary basis.

3. Arrangements for Planning and Transport Staff

The North Wales Corporate Joint Committee will need to consider arrangements for commissioning the Planning and Transport duties prescribed to be discharged by CJs – i.e. to prepare, develop, produce, monitor, review and revise both a Strategic Development Plan (SDP) and a Regional Transport Plan (RTP).

The CJC has budget provision for the cost of employing 3 Strategic Planning posts and 2 Regional Transport posts for part of the 2022/23 year.

However, employing staff directly is not the only option to carry out these functions. Other options also need to be considered, such as appointing specialist consultants, or commissioning local authorities to lead on Strategic Planning and/or Regional Transport.

Since at the last meeting of the CJC, the timetable from the Government for carrying out the Strategic Transport Plan has been extended and it's now likely to be 2024 at the earliest when this work has to be completed. That means that there is less urgency to reach a decision.

Therefore, **it is recommended to wait for now, and defer establishing any regional Planning and Transport posts** to give the new temporary Chief Executive of the CBC an opportunity to influence the way forward.

VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer

I have worked with the author to prepare this report and confirm the contents.

Statutory Finance Officer

I have worked with the author to prepare this report and confirm the contents.