



REPORT TO THE NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD
15 March, 2024

TITLE: North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC)
– Extending the part-time secondment of the EAB Portfolio Director as interim CJC Chief Executive

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. You will recall that the Corporate Joint Committee has submitted requests to the North Wales Economic Ambition Board over the past eighteen months to release the Portfolio Director on a part-time basis to fulfil the role of the CJC’s Temporary Chief Executive until the 31 March, 2024. The initial request was approved at the Ambition Board’s meeting on the 30 September, 2022 and then the two requests to further extend the secondment at the Board’s meetings on the 24 March, 2023 and 27 October, 2023. This report submits a further request for the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (EAB), to agree an extension to that secondment, for two days per week, up until the 30 June, 2024.

2. DECISION SOUGHT

- 2.1 That the EAB consider the following recommendations and proposed arrangements:
- That the EAB supports the extension of the arrangement to release the Portfolio Director’s time for two days per week until 30 June 2024 on a part time secondment basis to undertake the Interim Chief Executive role.
 - That all associated employment and associated costs are covered by the North Wales CJC

3. REASONS FOR THE DECISION

- 3.1. Taking into consideration the Councils’ decision, in principle, to the transfer of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board’s functions in assisting the region to establish a Corporate Joint Committee and to ensure that the Ambition Board’s interests are safeguarded as the CJC moves forward.

By now, the 1 July 2024 has been identified as the date for the final transfer of the Board’s functions to the CJC and a report outlining the steps to be taken in order to realise that transfer will be submitted to the North Wales Corporate Joint-Committee's next meeting on the 22 March, 2024.

4. BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1. At its meeting on 22 July 2022, the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee reviewed the role of their Chief Executive and, after considering the options, resolved to submit a request to the North Wales Economic Ambition Board to release part of their Portfolio Director's time to fulfil



31 March 2023. As already stated, the Ambition Board agreed to this request at its meeting on the 30 September, 2022.

- 4.2 The option to submit this request to the Ambition Board was selected as it is likely that the Ambition Board will be incorporated into the CJC, that there would be a substantially higher cost if a stand-alone Chief Executive post was created, and as there is insufficient availability of time required for one of the 6 local authority Chief Executives to oversee the CJC's development.
- 4.3 The part-time secondment of the Portfolio Director ensures that the Growth Deal and Growth Vision continue to be delivered during and after that transition, with turbulence minimised.
- 4.4 The EAB's Portfolio Director's involvement in establishing the CJC is required with respect to the Economic Wellbeing aspect regardless, and therefore extending this arrangement by means of the part-time secondment allows for that involvement to be focused and for duplication of resources to be avoided.
- 4.5 The decision in principle, to transfer the Ambition Board to the CJC, has already been taken by the Councils and following the recent legislative changes, it will now be possible to undertake this process over the next few months. As part of any transfer, the status of all Portfolio Staff will be addressed.
- 4.6 The Ambition Board, via Cyngor Gwynedd as the host Authority, remains as Alwen Williams' contractual employer whilst the CJC recompenses the Ambition Board for both direct and indirect costs associated with the secondment.
- 4.7 At its meeting on the 24 March, 2023 and again on the 27 October, 2023, the Ambition Board agreed to extend its Portfolio Director's secondment in order to fulfil the role of the CJC's Chief Executive until 31 March, 2024.
- 4.8 In light of the fact that a number of critical matters still require further attention before the CJC is able to appoint a permanent Chief Executive e.g. the likely transfer of staff to the CJC's employment, there is a requirement to re-visit the decision taken.
- 4.9 Under current circumstances, the CJC needs to ensure a Chief Executive on a temporary basis and therefore, with the Ambition Board's agreement, it is recommended that Alwen Williams' secondment to that post is extended until 30 June, 2024 on current terms
- 4.10 On receipt of the Ambition Board's approval to release its Portfolio Director for a further period on current terms, the Corporate Joint Committee will consider the recommendation to extend Alwen Williams' appointment at its meeting on the afternoon of the 22 March, 2024.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. It can be confirmed that the proposed extension to this part-time secondment would be net cost-neutral with the CJC undertaking the relevant cost.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The EAB has been established pursuant to Governance Agreement 2 to act as the decision-making body for the partnership of local authorities and the education bodies to deliver the



needs to deliver are defined by the agreement and the related Overarching Business Plan which was completed in tandem with the Growth Deal. It is also required to appoint the Portfolio Director to Lead the Portfolio Management Office.

- 6.2. Nevertheless, the advent of the Corporate Joint Committees was presaged in GA2 and is specifically referenced as a matter reserved to the Councils. There is a specific provision in the agreement which acknowledges the anticipated creation of CJC's and that a transfer of functions might occur. This is reflected in the in-principle decision of the 6 executives in December 2021 to transfer the functions of the EAB to the CJC provided that the model and the statutory framework was in place to achieve this. The CJC's have now been established and the statutory model is practically completed. However, at this point in time the work of creating the CJC as a functioning public body with appropriate governance and management arrangements is being moved forward. This work needs to reflect and prepare for the assumption of the role of the EAB into the CJC and its governing model.
- 6.3. In terms of GA2 the proposed extension to the secondment does not require that EAB resources and contributions are provided to support the CJC. There also provision in the interim for maintaining capacity for supporting the work of delivering the EAB's functions. It is also relevant that the transition of the EAB's functions to the CJC needs to be properly planned and resourced to ensure that when the functions transferred this can be achieved effectively and efficiently.

APPENDICES:

None

STATUTORY OFFICERS RESPONSE:

i. Monitoring Officer – Host Authority:

I have had an input into the report and I am satisfied with the propriety of the recommendations

ii. Statutory Finance Officer (the Host Authority's Section 151 Officer):

I think what is proposed offers a pragmatic solution to deal with the situation. I can confirm that arrangements are in place to reimburse Ambition North Wales for the Portfolio Director's time when they assume the role of Chief Executive of the Corporate Joint Committee. I have no objection to the decision sought from the perspective of financial propriety.