

Discussion paper for Partnership Council - 17 March 2025

Corporate Joint Committees

Purpose

1. The Partnership Council will provide local authority leaders with an important opportunity to inform the development of a 'prospectus' setting out our shared ambitions for Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs).

Context

2. CJCs were established four years ago. The approach was coproduced with local government leadership through the Working Group on Local Government and were designed to provide a consistent and formal framework to support regional collaboration. Local authorities could use CJCs to streamline and simplify other regional arrangements and set a ready-made foundation for future collaborative working. These important statutory bodies add strategic value and have made some real progress in developing effective and productive regional working. (Annex A sets out more background on CJC's roles and structure.)
3. We are poised to move to the next phase of CJCs development. At a time of scarce resources this presents an exciting opportunity to consider collectively how we can make better use of existing financial, expertise and human resources. It will also help us improve strategic delivery across critical interdependent areas such as economic wellbeing, transport planning and land-use planning. We can also capitalise on the opportunities presented by the discussion on post 2026 replacement EU funds.
4. In 2020 our [Framework for Regional Investment](#) set out an agreed model for the use of replacement EU funds in Wales. It was centred on a commitment to devolve a significant element of funding and decision-making from the Welsh Government to the CJC regions, so they could prioritise strategic and regional portfolios of interventions. While the previous UK government decided on a different model which bypassed the Welsh Government and Senedd entirely, the Framework remains our starting point for a new approach post-2026.
5. Planning for post-2026 regional funding is in its early stages and is subject to the outcome of the UK Government's Spending Review. We expect the UK Government to return decision-making over these funds to the Welsh Government in line with Wales' devolution settlement. We are committed to working with local government to explore how the Welsh Government devolving funding and decision-making to CJCs can best work in this context.
6. CJCs are designed to be flexible, and we recognise that there is no 'one size fits all' approach. However, the CJC model offers real potential to develop and significant opportunity for local authority Leaders to work collectively for the benefit of their communities and regions. With the right ambition, CJCs can rapidly become the focus for the delivery of regional economic wellbeing.

They offer the mechanism to forge the transformation at the scale needed to help maintain sustainable public services and capitalise on the opportunities for investment and growth across Wales.

7. The Welsh Government is currently working with local government to develop a 'prospectus' for CJs that will seek to consolidate the delivery of existing functions and explore areas where it is possible to go further. For example, identifying how additional decision making might maximise economic growth, as well as ensuring governance is lean but still effective to ensure CJs are properly accountable.
8. As you know, work is also underway to develop a formalised strategic relationship with local government, recognising you as 'trusted partners' across a range of government activity. Clarifying our shared objectives in relation to regional collaboration will form part of this strategic relationship.
9. The capacity and capability of the CJs is of course critical to their ability to deliver as we expect, let alone take on more. The Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government has therefore decided to provide £200k to each CJC in 2025-26 to support the delivery of the ambitions of the forthcoming CJC prospectus. This money is intended to contribute to the development of capacity and governance arrangements in each region to maximise the opportunities of further decision-making responsibility. Because of the need to plan and provide longer term certainty, it is also intended to provide funding of £200k for each CJC in the following two years, 2026-27 and 2027-28.

For discussion

10. Partnership Council is invited to discuss:

- What additional decision-making responsibility, or other 'levers', are needed to enable the opportunities that a CJC offers to drive collaboration, service improvement and deliver growth?
- How do we ensure that decision-making within CJs is transparent and CJs are able to be held to account and are able to be challenged for the decisions they take?

Annex A: Background to Corporate Joint Committees

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provides for Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) as a framework to support regional collaboration between local authorities. A CJC is a separate corporate body which can employ staff, hold assets and budgets, and undertake functions.

Regulations created four CJCs in Wales from 1 April 2021, based on the geographical areas requested by local government and reflecting existing regional collaborative arrangements:

- The North Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Gwynedd, Denbighshire, Anglesey, Wrexham, Conwy and Flintshire.
- The Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Powys and Ceredigion.
- The South-East Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan, Monmouthshire, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Newport, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent and Bridgend.
- The South-West Wales Corporate Joint Committee – Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea.

Powers and duties

CJCs have duties to prepare:

- a Strategic Development Plan; and
- a Regional Transport Plan.

CJCs are also able to exercise an economic well-being power - the power to do anything to enhance or promote the economic well-being of its area.

How a CJC delivers its functions and operates is largely for determination by its members. This flexibility enables CJCs to differ between geographical areas to meet the specific needs and ambitions of their region.

Membership and Governance

The 2021 Act requires the leaders of each constituent council to be the members of their respective CJCs. The leaders make the decisions within the CJC on behalf of the councils they are elected to represent.

CJCs can engage and involve others in their work through co-option. Who is co-opted and for what purpose is for individual CJCs to decide.

A CJC is scrutinised by its constituent councils and is required to participate in local scrutiny and have due regard to the recommendations made by scrutiny committees of its constituent councils about CJCs.