

## **Partnership Council for Wales – 17 March 2025**

**12.30 - 14.30 via Teams**

### **Chair's opening remarks**

#### **Jayne Bryant MS, Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government**

1. The Cabinet for Secretary for Housing and Local Government (the Cabinet Secretary) welcomed members to the meeting and noted apologies.
2. Before starting on the main agenda items, the Cabinet Secretary provided an update on the local government democracy event held in March at Cardiff City Stadium, emphasising the positive impact of discussions and of shared learning experiences.

### **Agenda item 1: Climate Change – Local Government Climate Strategy Panel update and recommendations**

#### **Led by Cllr Lis Burnett, Leader, Vale of Glamorgan Council and Tim Peppin WLGA**

3. The Cabinet Secretary introduced the regular update on the work of the Local Government Climate Strategy Panel and the WLGA Climate Support Programme. The Cabinet Secretary noted the importance of leadership and engagement to ensure climate change considerations are embedded in daily activities and decision-making.
4. Cllr Lis Burnett, in her capacity as spokesperson for the Local Government Climate Strategy Panel, spoke about the good progress against commitments and the engagement of councils in Wales to hit the 2030 targets.
5. Tim Peppin provided further details on the progress made, including the work of task and finish groups and practical issues related to the transition to electric fleets.
6. The Cabinet Secretary confirmed ongoing funding for the WLGA Climate Support Programme and noted the recommendations from the Panel. The recommendations were agreed by the Partnership Council, with members acknowledging the progress and key points in the paper including council members actively promoting this work within their organisations and across networks, accelerating uptake and progress.
7. The Local Government Climate Strategy Panel was cited as an excellent example of collaboration and leadership by the lead Chief Executives for each strand of work.
8. The Cabinet Secretary invited an update specifically on adaptation to climate change at the next meeting.

*Due to the Prif Weinidog (PW) running late, agenda item 2 was postponed. Agenda item 3 was initiated until the PW arrived.*

## **Agenda item 2 – Discussion with the Prif Weinidog**

### **Led by Eluned Morgan MS, Prif Weinidog**

9. The Prif Weinidog expressed gratitude for the work undertaken by local government during difficult circumstances.
10. The Prif Weinidog highlighted the following key points in relation to the change in UK government in July 2024:
  - the change provided an opportunity to reset and build on the relationship between the Welsh and UK Governments.
  - there was a commitment to investing in public services and infrastructure
  - the ongoing inflation pressures were noted but, while less than desired, the Welsh Government had received its largest funding increase from the UK Government since devolution.
  - there are areas where the Welsh Government and UK Government disagree, but the Prif Weinidog believed that discussions would remain constructive.
  - recent global developments, including the political changes in the United States, were having significant consequences. The UK Government's intention to increase defence budgets will have implications but could also present opportunities for Wales.
  - Welfare reform presents challenges. Wales has a higher-than-average number of disabled people receiving Personal Independence Payments. The UK Treasury has been informed of these challenges.
11. The following key points from members were raised:
  - concerns about the future replacement for the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), including the need for clarity and assurance related to the transition period as well as job security for former SPF-funded roles post-2026.
  - the challenges faced by local government and the importance of lobbying for fair funding for Wales.
  - Devolution of powers and decision making to local government on economy, transport, and planning issues is progressing faster in England than in Wales.
  - the need for better planning processes to enable quicker and better delivery of outcomes for growth and communities.
  - assurances sought regarding the impact of welfare reform.
  - The impact of social care costs and the need for decisions to be made closer to communities.
12. The Prif Weinidog addressed each point raised by members and thanked them for the discussion.

### Agenda item 3 – Corporate Joint Committee Prospectus

**Led by Jayne Bryant MS, Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government and Cllr Rob Stewart, WLGA Deputy Leader and Spokesperson for Economy and Energy**

13. The Cabinet Secretary opened the item by setting out the purpose of the item was to discuss shared ambitions for regional working to help inform the development of a Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) prospectus which was currently in co-development.
14. The Cabinet Secretary emphasised that local government had requested the establishment of CJsCs, acknowledging that certain activities are more effectively managed at a regional level while also recognising there is not a 'one size fits all' approach to CJsCs.
15. The Cabinet Secretary acknowledged certain regions had been advocating for CJsCs to lead regional economic growth, and confirmed the Welsh Government was keen to support these ambitions. The Cabinet Secretary stated the next phase of CJC development was an opportunity for local government to set out the tools and powers needed to drive such ambitions, which would be included in the prospectus.
16. The Cabinet Secretary concluded by informing members of her decision to provide £200k to each CJC in 2025-26 for capacity building to enable the delivery of ambitions. Equivalent funding would also be provided in 2026-27 and 2027-28.
17. Cllr Rob Stewart welcomed the announcement of three-year funding for CJsCs. He emphasised the need for a flexible framework, recognising varying views across Wales on how fast and far each region might want to go with CJsCs. He confirmed discussions were taking place which would help inform the prospectus.
18. The following key points from members were raised:
  - the need for devolving more powers to local authorities, the importance of decision making at the regional level, and ensuring funding follows these powers.
  - the need to streamline regional bodies and avoid creating unnecessary bureaucracy. The importance of focusing on outcomes and practical collaboration to save money and improve efficiency.
  - lack of capacity to deliver on projects

### Concluding remarks

#### **Jayne Bryant MS, Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government**

19. The Cabinet Secretary invited any other business, but there was none raised. The Cabinet Secretary thanked members for attending and for their contributions to the meeting and confirmed that the next meeting would take place in July 2025.