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Chief Executive
Prif Weithredwr



8th January 2021

Date/Dyddia

Email/Ebost

Sent via email : LGPartnerships@gov.wales

chief.executive@flintshire.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Welsh Government Consultation Document: “Regulations to establish Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs)”

I write on behalf of Flintshire County Council (“the Council”), setting out views agreed and endorsed by its members through the scrutiny process and with the formal approval of its Cabinet.

North Wales as a whole, and the Council in particular, has a well-established and effective pattern of co-operation and regional working. The Council therefore can support the creation of CJCs as a means of furthering regional collaboration. Of particular note is the fact that the regulations will allow a CJC to co-opt non local government bodies as voting members, which was a request made by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (“NWEAB”) to achieve equality of participation between key partners (Question 4).

In supporting the proposals it is nevertheless important for the Council to understand the full extent of what is proposed and how the new CJC will relate to existing regional structures. For example, the region has established the NWEAB which is working effectively, and the 6 councils have only recently agreed and signed the final Growth Deal with the UK and Wales Government. It is essential therefore that the North Wales CJC should:

- i. complement those existing structures and be capable of being adopted without wholesale revision to governance arrangements;
- ii. add value to the work of the NWEAB;
- iii. be able to be serviced by the existing NWEAB Programme Office and Host Authority without the need for the creation of a new regional staffing resource which would be both a cost burden and create duplication;
- iv. lead to the conferment of new powers and resources to the region.

Applying those criteria to the questions posed within the consultation paper:

- 1) if CJCs are to help facilitate regional collaboration then it is both appropriate and necessary that they should be subject to the same governance and administrative framework with similar powers and duties to principal councils. By logical extension this should also include accounting requirements (Questions 1 and 10)

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- 2) Likewise the area for the North Wales CJC should correspond to the North Wales region and the NWEAB (Question 2)

The Council notes that CJsCs will have powers that overlap with the functions of the principal councils in North Wales. So far it appears that you have only published consultations on the devolution/conferral of statutory powers and duties under 2 of the proposed statutory purposes for CJsCs. Greater clarity is therefore required at this stage on the precise scope of the functions which will initially be assigned to CJsCs and any future plans to imbue them with further powers (Question 14).

The transfer of existing local government powers to CJsCs could also lead to diminishing local autonomy and thus accountability. The consultation paper made reference to the fact that CJsCs should decide for themselves how they will exercise such functions concurrently with the constituent councils without coming into conflict with them, taking into account guidance to be published by yourselves. Again, it would be helpful to understand whether further guidance will be issued to CJsCs on how to balance regional decision making against local accountability, or whether each region will be free to make decisions that best reflect the local context and needs.

The need to be supported by local authority officers further reinforces the need for the CJsCs to be fully part of the local government family with membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme, continuity of employment etc. Taking the aforesaid into account the approach to staffing matters is broadly correct (Questions 11 – 13). Equally members and officers of the CJsCs need to be subject to the same codes of conduct and ethical framework as principal councils, as is currently the case within the NWEAB, so that there is consistency of expectation and governance (question 8).

The initial membership of CJsCs will be the Leaders of the constituent councils. In order to avoid to an increase in cost and duplication of resource, it also likely that they will be supported by existing employees within the constituent councils, especially for the statutory posts such as Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and S.151 Officer. All of those positions are already demanding, full time roles. It is important therefore that CJsCs function in such a way as to avoid or limit the potential strain this could impose on both councillors and officers, and to ensure that the capacity of the CJC is not limited as a result.

It is clear that these roles will be additional to current duties and responsibilities. The regulatory impact assessment identifies the anticipated costs to local government of these proposals, but no clear commitment to support those additional costs has been forthcoming. Within the local government community we will do what is possible to keep additional cost and bureaucracy to a minimum and would ask that the regulations give us the maximum flexibility to organise the CJC in order to achieve that end. However, there will still be additional costs and, after several years of local government finance settlements that do not meet the identified funding needs, it is clear that these proposals not generate any additional efficiencies to cover those additional costs.

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Welsh Government should therefore include additional funding allocations within the local government settlement to meet the costs of CJs from 2022 onwards.

Yours sincerely,



Colin Everett
Chief Executive



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