



City and County of Swansea

## Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel – Development & Regeneration**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Tuesday, 8 March 2022 at 10.00 am

**Present:** Councillor J W Jones (Chair) Presided

**Councillor(s)**

P M Black  
L James  
T M White

**Councillor(s)**

C A Holley  
P K Jones

**Councillor(s)**

P R Hood-Williams  
W G Thomas

**Cabinet Member(s)**

Robert Francis-Davies  
Rob Stewart

Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism  
Cabinet Member for Economy Strategy and Finance

**Officer(s)**

Phil Holmes  
Clare James  
Brij Madahar  
Huw Mowbray

Head of Planning & City Regeneration  
Economic Development Manager  
Scrutiny Team Leader  
Development and Physical Regeneration Strategic  
Manager

Paul Relf

Economic Development & External Funding Manager

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): P Downing, E W Fitzgerald, S J Gallagher, D W Helliwell, M H Jones and S M Jones

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### 42 **Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, the following interest was declared:

Councillor Paxton Hood-Williams – Minute No. 48 – Councillor Paxton Hood-Williams declared a personal interest as a Member of Swansea Rural Development Programme, Local Action Group.

### 43 **Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips**

No declarations were made.

#### **44 Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)**

The Panel considered minutes from previous meeting(s) and agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2022 as an accurate record of the meeting.

#### **45 Public Questions**

No questions were submitted by members of the public.

#### **46 South West Wales Regional Economic Delivery Plan**

The Panel considered a report on the South West Wales Regional Economic Delivery Plan, which was recently approved by Cabinet (20 Jan).

Cabinet Member(s) / Officer(s) were present to brief the Panel and take questions on the new Regional Economic Delivery Plan that will replace the 2013 Swansea Bay City Region Economic Regeneration Strategy as the council's over-arching economic regeneration policy document.

It was noted that the new Delivery Plan will be adopted / owned and overseen by the new South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC). Regeneration Directors will keep track of progress and will be responsible for developing business cases, securing investment and ensuring delivery on the CJC's behalf.

Phil Holmes, Head of Planning & City Regeneration, took Panel members in detail through the report to ensure awareness and understanding, and invite views. He highlighted the following:

- The economic and policy context has changed considerably at the Welsh and UK level since 2013, particularly in light of Brexit and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the developing focus on tackling climate change, and that the regional landscape has also changed with the advent of Corporate Joint Committees and the preparation of new Regional Economic Frameworks by Welsh Government that set out visions and high level priorities for each region in Wales.
- The new South West Wales Regional Economic Delivery Plan, developed jointly between the four Councils in the region and in partnership with the Welsh Government, responds to those changing circumstances with a Plan that is fit for the future.
- With the assistance of expert consultants, the Plan is based on extensive research, and stakeholder consultation and engagement, and consideration of the strategic policy context at local, regional and national level.
- The Plan is aligned with the new Welsh Government Regional Economic Framework (REF) and provides a further layer of detail below the REF, outlining the objectives and actions that will deliver against the high-level vision in the REF.
- The Plan sets out an ambitious 'route map' for the development of the region's economy over the next ten years, identifying priorities for intervention and setting out how business, government, education, voluntary / community organisations, social enterprises and other partners can work together to bring them forward.

- There has been good progress since 2013 with an additional 20,000 jobs created in the region, upskilling, growth in business and improved economic activity which has helped to close the productivity gap with the UK. But despite gains, there are still challenges with concentrations of disadvantage in the region, and issues affecting investment to the area, which means the gap is still substantial.
- However, the new Plan focuses on the strengths and assets in the region, and maximising opportunities using that strength, e.g., the region's energy potential, university-industrial links, strong cultural identity, environmental assets and quality of life offer. The Plan aims to build on these distinctive regional strengths and opportunities to develop a more prosperous and resilient South West Wales economy.
- The Plan has three key 'ambitions, supported by three complementary Missions, which will guide activity over the next ten years:

Ambitions:

- Resilient and sustainable
- Enterprising and ambitious
- Balanced and inclusive

Missions:

- Mission 1: Establishing South West Wales as a UK leader in renewable energy and the development of a net zero economy: Taking forward the region's major energy related projects and driving the benefits through the region (via industrial decarbonisation, supply chain opportunities, university-linked innovation, etc.).
  - Mission 2: Building a strong, resilient and embedded business base: Understanding and growing the business stock, supporting widespread social and commercial entrepreneurship, creating stronger supply chain and innovation networks, making public sector support sustainable; driving forward technology adoption and diffusion.
  - Mission 3: Growing and sustaining the 'experience' offer: Linking environmental quality, quality of life and community character to create a region that retains and attracts talent and investment, and to promote this consistently and powerfully to the outside world.
- The Plan sets out some initial key action areas to deliver against the ambitions and missions. These actions will form the basis of a 'living' action plan document that will be regularly reviewed by regional partners and will evolve to embrace new investment proposals as they emerge. Within this there are a number of local and regional projects anticipated, some of which will be around improving strategic infrastructure and some involving major investment.
  - It was expected that the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee would meet in March to endorse the Regional Economic Delivery Plan.

Questions and discussion focused on the following:

- The extent of consultation carried out and market research – noted the role played by leading economic development consultants and use of on-line methods which proved to be effective and accessible, tapping into intelligence and forecasting models, data sets, etc.
- The importance of regional transport links and work going on to develop this – noted progress on the Swansea Bay Metro Project, and continuing consideration being given to a Swansea Parkway railway station and benefits this could have for the area. Panel Members heard that Phase 1 of the Metro project would involve the existing network / lines, upgrade works, etc., and Phase 2 would focus on new lines, e.g., light rail.
- Panel members welcomed the mission to focus on renewable energy and development of a net zero economy. The extensive range of existing and emerging projects and energy assets was noted. The importance of attracting visitors to the area, as eco-tourism, was also raised, and felt perhaps not emphasised enough in plans. It was noted that Mission 3 did acknowledge the importance of nature and biodiversity in Swansea's offer and experience and recognises the attraction of Swansea's natural environment to visitors and provides springboard for relevant projects to support this.
- The dependency of the South West Wales economy on tourism, and its sustainability and resilience. There was also the challenge of balancing the natural environment and development in the region, which can often be competing tensions in the desire for economic progress.
- The performance in terms of generating new jobs in the region – noted that by 2019 there were 322,000 jobs in the region, an increase of 20,000 on the 2013 figure. This was recognised as being impressive and Panel members requested a meaningful breakdown of these 20,000 jobs to understand where the growth has come from, e.g., specific sectors. The Head of Service undertook to provide a response in writing.
- Links between the regional and national plans, and how the Regional Economic Delivery Plan competes with Cardiff / neighbouring regions. It was highlighted to the Panel that the timing of the regional plan meant that it was able to be knit together with the Welsh Government REF.
- Whether the region has access to UK levelling up / recovery funding streams, e.g., money specifically for the recovery of coastal / seaside areas, or whether there was discrete funding for Wales. It was noted the regional plan was not led by available funding which in turn shapes projects, but rather establishes what is needed in the area and how funding can then deliver that. Officers undertook to clarify the position regarding access to funding streams, and it was noted that the Council was working hard to ensure Swansea and region can access every available penny as we emerge from Covid and into recovery.
- The role of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee in plan delivery, and the monitoring of the Regional Economic Delivery Plan. It was noted that the Swansea Bay City Region work will be subsumed into the work of the Corporate Joint Committee as one of the key strands of activity.

The Convener thanked all for their contribution to the discussion.

## 47 Project Update Report

The latest regular monitoring report on regeneration programme / projects was presented to the Panel, for any comments / views on progress and achievements. Huw Mowbray, Development & Physical Regeneration Strategic Manager, provided relevant updates.

### Copr Bay:

Panel noted the successful handover of the Arena to ATG and delivery of first / test events on 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> February which went well and garnered positive feedback. There are still some difficulties with labour availability and materials but are being resolved with the contractor to address outstanding construction issues. It was noted that whilst Brexit has had an impact it was not the only reason as there were competing demands from projects in the wider region for skilled labour, e.g., new nuclear power station near Bristol. Panel members heard that there was no specific date for the constructor to be off site as it was important that all work is completed to satisfaction.

Panel members queried whether the Council was exploring options around the naming of the Arena. It was confirmed that as per lease agreement, ATG held naming rights, and this was work in progress and they would discuss any proposals with the Council.

The Panel queried the naming of certain meeting rooms in the Arena after councillors. The Leader stated that he welcomed suggestions with regard to the naming of new facilities and assets.

The Panel also heard about progress with the anticipated hotel development adjacent to the Arena, with possible announcements in the next few weeks. It was stressed that this would be a private sector development, not Council led, but the Council was monitoring things closely and doing all it could to facilitate progress. Panel members were told it was likely to be development of 6-8 floors / 120 beds along with commercial areas, and the Council would be looking for a 'statement' building befitting of the surrounding area.

### Swansea Central North:

Discussions ongoing, in conjunction with development partner Urban Splash, and with potential tenants of office hub / commercial elements. Proposals expected to be submitted shortly, with concept design aimed for target date of October 2022.

### 71/72 Kingsway:

Constructors now on site for the development of the office building, with piling work ongoing, and project is on track for completion August 2023. An agreement has been made with the first tenant which will be announced in due course. It was anticipated the flexible office building would achieve in the region of 600 jobs. With regard to the Barclays Bank element an alternate procurement option is required to meet the ERDF funding programme requirement, as the Council is keen for swift progress, not something for later in the project.

### Wind Street:

Work is complete in essence, except for the auto bollard sub-contractor who will return to site in March. There is ongoing discussion with traders regarding the operation of external space and seating.

Panel members queried progress with regard to proposed Interpretation Boards based on the history of Wind Street, and it was agreed to provide a response on what the intention is in writing.

### TAN15 Development and Flood Risk:

Noted that this is an issue for all Wales, and the Council has responded to the Welsh Government on intentions regarding preparation of regional Stage 1 Strategic Flood Consequence Assessment, as required by Welsh Government. This brings together the various policies, plans, strategies relevant to a high-level overview of flood risk, to demonstrate a co-ordinated and joint working approach aligning with Welsh Government requirements and aligning with South East Wales approach. How we address the key issues of TAN15 is subject to ongoing discussion, and the main area of focus is the management of flood risk to strategic development sites along the River Tawe (City Centre, SA1, Tawe Riverside and Swansea Vale). The Panel was interested in the possible financial implications of address TAN15.

### Castle Square:

The Panel heard that this project is moving forward well, with design works complete and planning application to follow. Confirmation received that the project would benefit from some funding via the Welsh Government Transforming Towns Grant. The Leaf Boat will be removed, and options are being discussed with the original artist for the relocation of this public artwork. Meetings have also been held with CADW to ensure project addresses any heritage impacts and is acceptable.

The Panel asked about future cleaning and maintenance of the Square, whether this would be the Council's responsibility or fall into private hands. It was clarified that the Square will remain a Council asset but with commercial units operating within the Square there would be an element of shared responsibility for cleaning / maintenance which will be made clear in agreements. Maintenance costs have also been built into the project budget.

### Shaping Swansea:

Strategic Partnership Agreement with Urban Splash has been agreed and subject to legal approval will be signed. Once signed it will enable Urban Splash to take the schemes forward, though things were at an early stage. It was noted that the project name is to be changed shortly. More on project activity would be reported to scrutiny in due course.

Community Hub:

Emergency enabling works completed. Phase 2 about to start.

In relation to wider relocation out of the Civic Centre into city centre hubs, some issues around paper storage needs, but options being explored to reduce requirements.

Palace Theatre:

80% cost certainty expected shortly where further review can be undertaken on a more definitive position. In the meantime, Value Engineering options are being reviewed, without compromising heritage, end product quality, and let ability.

Skyline:

Panel was informed that positive discussions are continuing with land acquisition issues to be finalised. A report to Cabinet post Council elections on the project was anticipated. It was noted that should the project be approved it would be the first Skyline scheme in Europe, outside of New Zealand, featuring a cable car gondola, and the whole project would provide a major new leisure offer for Swansea.

Swansea Vale:

Work ongoing. Noted that the initial proposed site at Swansea Vale is still a front runner for Park & Ride relocation.

Repurposing:

Progress on various improvement works and schemes was provided.

The Convener thanked the officer for his report.

**48 Impact of Brexit on Rural Development Programme and Funding Update (Post 2023)**

A report was provided to the Panel for information, further to a request from the Panel for an update on current situation. It is anticipated that this topic will be discussed again in the future pending further information / clarity around future funding.

**49 Letters**

Correspondence with Cabinet Members was provided for any comment / observations which related to last meeting discussion on Foreshore Developments.

The Convener referred to the Panel's request for an update regarding the marketing of foreshore sites, and in particular any update regarding interest shown in the Civic Centre site. There was some concern at the brief response provided. This would be followed up.

The Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism stated that the Swansea Bay Strategy was being revised to update the existing 2008 document, which the Panel will be able to discuss in due course.

## **50 Annual Work Plan Review**

As it was the Panel's final meeting of the municipal year and Council term, the Convener thanked all Panel members for their work and those that have supported this work. Panel members were invited to reflect on the way the Panel has worked over the past year and their experience, and any observations that may inform future practice, considering for example:

- Have things worked well within the Panel over the past year?
- Has the Panel's work focused on the right things?
- What, if anything, could be done better?
- What have we learnt that will help us to improve and develop future scrutiny?

The following were raised:

- The importance of dedicated scrutiny of development and regeneration which should continue post Council elections
- This is a huge area to keep track on, and the Panel has not been able to discuss everything, e.g., smaller projects, but that is down to time and resources. Some things have taken a lot of the Panel's time such as the Copr Bay / Arena development.
- The Panel would welcome the ability to meet more frequently.
- The Panel has been chaired very well and worked well in monitoring and challenging performance.
- The Panel has involved many councillors and all have engaged well, with every opportunity to ask questions and contribute.
- The Panel has been well supported by relevant officers, who have provided necessary information and advice.
- The Panel must always be satisfied that it is having influence and making a difference in its work, as it holds Cabinet Members to account and challenges performance. The Panel should keep a close eye on Cabinet / Cabinet Members' response to scrutiny.
- The Panel has helped to establish arrangements for regular monitoring of the regeneration programme projects, which previously did not exist for scrutiny, which have developed over time.

It was noted that some specific development and regeneration topics have been identified in the work plan that it has not been possible to consider in the available time and may be appropriate to carry forward into future work plan. The continuation of a Development & Regeneration Scrutiny Performance Panel, or otherwise other arrangement, will be a matter for Councillors in the new Council year, following the Council elections in May.



The meeting ended at 11.28 am

**Chair**