



Report of the Director of Corporate Services

Governance & Audit Committee - 25 October 2023

The Governance and Assurance Arrangements of Swansea Council's Strategic Partnerships

Purpose:	To provide the committee with an update on the governance and assurance arrangements of the council's strategic partnerships
Report Author:	Joanne Portwood
Finance Officer:	Paul Roach
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
For Information	

1. Background

1.1 The Governance and Audit Committee received a report about the governance and assurance arrangements of the council's strategic partnerships at its meeting on the 8th March 2023. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on these arrangements within each respective partnership including; Swansea Public Services Board, the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership, Partneriaeth Joint Committee, the South West Wales Joint Committee and the Swansea Bay City Region Joint Committee.

2. Swansea Public Services Board

2.1 Swansea Public Services Board met on two occasions between March 2023 and the end of the September 2023. The main focus of the Board's work during this period was the approval and sign off of the Local Well-Being Plan and the development and implementation of the Action Plan 2023-24. Alongside this work, the Board also undertook work to strengthen the governance and performance management arrangements of the partnership.

2.2 In order to strengthen implementation of the Action Plan 2023-24 and arrangements for reporting performance, Strategic Leads have been identified for each of the 8 steps within the action plan. Each Strategic

Lead is accountable for reporting on the delivery of their step and its performance to Swansea's Public Services Board on a quarterly basis. In addition to reporting to formal committee meetings, Strategic Leads also meet informally to consider synergy between steps. Performance reports will also be considered by the Council's Scrutiny Programme committee twice a year.

- 2.3 Within the Action Plan 2023-24, a specific step has been identified in relation to influencing and connecting with other governance arrangements across the Swansea Bay region. Work is currently underway to map the Swansea Bay region partnership landscape to clarify governance, roles and responsibilities, interfaces and to identify opportunities for collaboration on plan content and to identify gaps / overlaps in activities. It is anticipated that the outcome of this work will result in organisations within the Swansea region and locality having a shared understanding of the partnership landscape and the opportunities to improve their synergy.
- 2.4 Within the Action Plan 2023-24, a specific step has been identified in relation to developing a Performance Management Framework and an Action Plan 2023-24. Work to develop and map milestones, and monitoring arrangements has been completed. Work to identify and map population level outcome measures is underway. It is anticipated that the outcome of this work will result in the PSB having an effective performance management framework in place. The PSB are working towards making and facilitating connections between all of the 8 steps included in the action plan.
- 2.5 Other notable activities in relation to the governance arrangements of Swansea's Public Services Board over the last six months has included revising the frequency of meetings (now quarterly), reviewing the terms of reference for the wider Partnership Forum (now to meet once a year, prior to undertaking the annual review of performance) and revising the terms of reference for Public Services Board.

3. West Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board

- 3.1 The West Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board has met on three occasions between March 2023 and the end of the September 2023. The focus of the Board's work during this period was the approval and sign off the West Glamorgan Area Plan and Action Plan for 2023-27, Annual Report and End of Year Finance and Performance Report. During the meeting, the Board also reviewed the Regional Investment Plan for 2023-24 and received updates on programme delivery.
- 3.2 For the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board to deliver the Area Plan and Action Plan it was necessary for the Programme to be amended to enable the partners to meet the outcomes within the plans. The portfolio now has 6 Population Programmes (Communities and

Older People, Carers, Wellbeing and Learning Disabilities, Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health, Children and Young People and Neurodivergence). In addition, there are several supporting programmes that are designed to enable the population programmes to deliver their objectives for example Digital and Data and Workforce.

- 3.3 The West Glamorgan Regional Partnership officially launched the Peoples Forum on 18th April 2023. The event brought together the Statutory Partners, Third Sector organisations, Unpaid Carers and citizens from across the region. The programme will include a variety of examples of how the Regional Investment Fund has supported the region in its delivery of valuable health and social care services, and how they are making a meaningful difference to the lives of people who need care and support. The event was well attended and included presentations, interactive workshop-style sessions, and information stalls.
- 3.4 The Regional Partnership has established two “Liaison Forums” which includes Users with Lived Experience and Unpaid Carers to support the coproduction of delivery plans and to support the development of strategies. The partnership intends to expand the number of liaison forums to cover the population programmes and is strengthening the participation and engagement by connecting with existing networks across the region.
- 3.5 The Regional Partnership has been working with the Public Service, Pan Cluster Planning Network, and its statutory partners to plan and map the delivery plans to ensure there is synergy between the plans.
- 3.6 The West Glamorgan Regional Partnership has been working extensively with the other regions across Wales and with Welsh Government colleagues to develop a set of national Performance Measures both qualitative and quantitative which will support assurance for the partnership that the expected outcomes are being delivered.

4 Partneriaeth Joint Committee

- 4.1 Between March 2023 and the end of September 2023, Partneriaeth Joint Committee has met on one occasion. The main focus of activity has been the approval of Partneriaeth’s Strategic Plan/Business Plan for 2023-24, Partneriaeth’s Budget for 2023-24 and Medium Term Financial Plan for 2023-34 to 2026-27, in addition to monitoring performance and managing risk. Partneriaeth’s Scrutiny Councillor Group has also continued to meet during this time period, to ensure that Partneriaeth is operating according to its Legal Agreement, its Business Plan and its timetable is being managed effectively.
- 4.2 Partneriaeth Joint Committee has a responsibility for conducting an annual review of its governance framework, including the system of

internal control. During the second quarter of 2023, work was undertaken to produce Partneriaeth's Annual Governance Statement for 2022-23. The review of effectiveness for 2022-23 was informed by the work undertaken during the Internal Audit review, which included a follow-up of the implementation of significant governance issues and priorities for improvement identified in 2021-22. Additional assurance was provided by the Head of Internal Audit Assurance opinion, based on the work undertaken by Internal Audit in 2022-23, along with the minutes from the Partneriaeth Joint Committee.

- 4.3 The Internal Audit review gave a 'moderate' assurance rating on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, internal control, risk management and financial management arrangements in place. Areas requiring further improvement were identified and have been included as priorities for improvement within the Annual Governance Statement 2022-23 Action Plan. The priorities for improvement focus on strengthening governance arrangements and business planning processes.
- 4.4 Although governance arrangements have been strengthened through the new Legal Agreement approved by the Joint Committee, it has been recommended that arrangements are strengthened further through the introduction of a scheme of delegation to ensure that there is a formal documented approach for decision making (including acceptance of grant awards). CIPFA also recommends that all local government bodies develop a Local Code of Governance which sets out the framework to conduct its business and affairs. The Annual Governance Statement 2022-23 Action Plan outlines commitments to; develop a local code of governance, develop a scheme of delegation and to put in place Business Partnering Agreements with Authorities who purchase services from Partneriaeth to ensure that there is clarity in the services provided and that the roles and expectations of each party are formally documented.
- 4.5 In terms of Partneriaeth's Business Plan 2022-23, there are currently no clear milestones and outcomes, subsequently the delivery and effectiveness of Partneriaeth cannot be fully scrutinised by the Joint Committee. The Annual Governance Statement 2022-23 Action Plan outlines commitments to; develop SMART outcomes within the Business Plan with clear milestones to facilitate the monitoring and evidencing of delivery and to ensure the Business Plan is aligned to the budget to ensure affordability and deliverability of priorities with a focus on Value for Money included within the Business Plan.

5. South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC)

- 5.1 The South West Wales CJC has met on two occasions between March 2023 and the end of the September 2023. The main focus of the committee's work during this period was the committee's corporate plan and finalising governance arrangements. A key focus in the

coming weeks is the submission of the delivery plan for the Regional Transport Plan which is being considered at the transport sub committee on the 9th October and which will be presented at the next CJC meeting on the 24th October for formal approval. In addition consideration will be given to the budget proposals for the next financial year. Scrutiny is provided by the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee – Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

- 5.2 The CJC's Governance and Audit Committee have met and considered its terms of reference. It was suggested that its terms of reference are structured in line with recent Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) guidance on Audit Committees. The last meeting was postponed, but the next meeting is planned for the 26th October for which the agendas are being finalised. However it is anticipated that it will include consideration of the budget outturn and also to provide an outcome of the recent Audit Wales programme for CJC's in general throughout Wales.
- 5.3 At the last meeting of the South West Wales CJC (6th June 2023) it was resolved that the Chief Executive of Pembrokeshire County Borough Council will be appointed as the next Chief Executive for the CJC from the 1st November 2023. It was also noted at this meeting, that this date was most appropriate to ensure that existing governance arrangements were in place, prior to the budget setting process for 2024-45 and the identification of priorities for the forthcoming year.
- 5.4. At the last meeting of the South West Wales CJC, further arrangements were set out which outlined the administrative and governance matters for the forthcoming year;
 - the re-establishment of the four sub committees of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee (Regional Transport Planning, Economic Well Being – Regional Economic Development, Strategic Development Planning and Economic Well Being – Regional Energy Strategy),
 - the re-establishment of the Governance and Audit Sub-Committee which would continue to be facilitated by Pembrokeshire County Council,
 - the re-confirmation that the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Standards Committee as the designated Standards Committee for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee,
 - the re-establishment of the Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee

6. Swansea Bay City Region Joint Committee

- 6.1 The Swansea Bay City Region Joint Committee was established to monitor the Swansea Bay City Region City Deal. The Joint Committee met on three occasions between March 2023 and the end of September 2023. The main focus of the Board's work during this period

was to receive project updates, the approval of Swansea Bay City Deal Portfolio cases (including the approval of updated existing business cases), overseeing progress and performance management and to consider the implications of private sector investment and contributions to the portfolio. The Board also considered Internal Audit Recommendations 2022-23, Audit Wales Outline Plan, Q4 2022/23 Financial Monitoring - Final Outturn position, the Joint Committee Statement of Accounts and the Swansea Bay City Deal Annual Report 2022-23.

- 6.2 During 2022-23, the governance and assurance arrangements of the Swansea Bay City have continued to be strengthened. The recommendations from previous Internal Audit reviews have been implemented with the development of action plans to monitor and track progress relating to actions arising from Gateway reviews. Risk management arrangements remain robust.
- 6.3 Assurance arrangements have been strengthened during 2022-23 with Welsh Government approval of the Gateway Assurance Framework received, which provides a framework for the management resourcing and governance of Gateway assurance arrangements for the Swansea Bay City Deal Portfolio, and its constituent programmes, projects and workstreams. The Framework also provides clarity for programme and project Senior Responsible Officers (SROs) and their teams on the assurance arrangements that apply to the Swansea Bay City Deal Portfolio. The introduction of the Joint Assurance Panel underpins the Gateway Assurance Framework by providing oversight of the development and implementation of the arrangements set out which has strengthened and enhanced existing procedures.
- 6.4 A Change Control Procedure has also been established, which is owned by the Programme (Portfolio) Board and highlights the changes that result from projects and programmes at Project, Programme and Portfolio level. Dashboards are presented to the Joint Committee on a quarterly basis, providing high level oversight on the progress of Programmes/Projects, with benefit realisation data now collated and included within the datasets presented.
- 6.5 Overall, the Internal Audit report has determined an audit assurance rating of 'Substantial'; with no or few weaknesses in the adequacy and/or effectiveness of the governance, internal control, risk management and financial management arrangements.
- 6.6 The Swansea Bay City Region Joint Scrutiny Committee met on two occasions between March 2023 to September. Members scrutinised progress and performance, approvals to update existing business cases and were updated on wider economic contextual issues. Members of the committee raised questions related to the risks on the RAG status of the Swansea Bay City Deal Portfolio and its constituent programmes/projects, private sector funding, the effect of inflation,

increased costs, local job creation and training opportunities and the realisation of benefits in the local region.

7. Integrated Assessment Implications

7.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

7.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

7.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

7.4 An IIA screening report was carried out for this report (Appendix 1). A full IIA is not required for this report, as it is for information only.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications.

9. Financial Implications

9.1 There are no financial implications arising from this information report.

Background papers:

Overview of the Governance and Assurance arrangements of Partnerships and Collaborations, Governance & Audit Committee, 13 July 2022

The Governance and Assurance Arrangements of Swansea Council's Strategic Partnerships, Governance and Audit Committee, 8th March 2023

Appendix 1: IIA screening report