



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **The role of Corporate Joint Committees**

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As the term ends, Ministerial colleagues and I wanted to update the Senedd on the important functions new Corporate Joint Committee (CJCs) will undertake.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provides for CJCs as a mechanism for regional collaboration through a more consistent and democratically controlled framework.

I am grateful to Members for this week approving Regulations which, along with a handful of minor ancillary Statutory Instruments, represent the final substantive tranche of legislation to establish the legal framework to provide for these important public bodies.

Four CJCs have been established based on the geographical areas requested by local government reflecting existing regional collaborative arrangements. I see CJCs as one of the most significant, strategic reforms of this Welsh Government, helping to enable and support the delivery of important, specific local government functions at a regional scale where it makes sense to do so.

The regulatory framework for CJCs is designed to provide flexibility and enable local discretion. How a CJC delivers its functions and operates will largely be for determination by its members. This flexibility will enable CJCs to differ between geographical areas to meet the specific needs of their region.

CJCs have significant immediate responsibilities with real impacts for local authorities and people living in their areas. From 30 June 2022 CJCs came under duties to prepare Strategic Development Plans and Regional Transport Plans.

The preparation of Strategic Development Plans by CJCs will enable a more consistent, cost effective and efficient approach to planning. SDPs will deliver more effective planning outcomes for communities by ensuring key issues, development and associated infrastructure is planned for in an integrated and comprehensive way across a wider geographical area.

The Regional Transport Plans will set out policies to provide for safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities and services in the region. These plans must meet the needs of persons living, working, visiting, or travelling through the region. They will also need to be consistent with the Wales Transport Strategy.

This wider regional transport planning is a key element of creating a joined-up and effective bus network. Welsh Government officials are working closely with local authorities on whether proposed new bus planning functions should be transferred from local authorities to CJsCs.

CJsCs also have the power to do anything to enhance or promote the economic well-being of its area. It is our expectation that CJsCs will include city and growth deal governance arrangements alongside other strategic planning for the region.

Local authorities retain the economic well-being powers. Agreements will be made between constituent Local Councils and CJsCs to agree what types of activity in relation to economic wellbeing remains at a local level and what would be best undertaken by the CJC to achieve their regional aspirations and ambitions.

CJsCs provide the legal framework for local authorities to work together on economic development, including the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). The Welsh Government does not endorse the UK Government's SPF, which encroaches on our devolution responsibilities and fails to replace EU funding in full. Our *Framework for Regional Investment for Wales*, co-produced with Welsh partners and the OECD, is a guiding policy for the SPF in Wales, which includes the use of CJC structures to deliver replacement EU regional investment funds. This Wales wide and regional approach gives an important strategic framework to support local authorities in their work on regional investment plans to help maximise investment and avoid duplicating efforts and governance.

Two or more CJsCs are able to discharge any of their functions jointly (subject to anything in the regulations or other legislation preventing them doing so) enabling cross-regional working to take place, but within the CJC framework. The OECD project supporting Regional Governance and Public Investment in Wales will include identifying specific areas for cross regional co-operation that the various local authorities would like to support as part of their regional action plans.

I will be meeting each of the four CJsCs to hear about the progress they have made and understand their ambition for regional collaboration. Welsh Government will continue to work with CJsCs to support their ongoing implementation