



One Voice Wales submission to the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee inquiry into Town Centre Regeneration September 2022

1.0 Introduction

One Voice Wales is recognised by the Welsh Government as the national representative body for community and town councils in Wales. It represents the sector on the Local Government Partnership Council and over 89% of the 732 community and town councils are in membership, with numbers growing year on year. As well as our representative role, we also provide support and advice to councils on an individual basis and have previously launched, with Welsh Government support, a modular training programme for councillors. We believe strongly that community councils are well-placed to develop the economic, social and environmental well-being of the areas they serve and, as such, are active and proactive in debating key issues such as energy policies, environmental issues and strategic planning. Our sector is therefore well placed to contribute to a successful future nation, building community and public services from the bottom up.

One Voice Wales is delighted to contribute to the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee's inquiry into Town Centre Regeneration. The response has been co-ordinated and written by Mr Lyn Cadwallader, Chief Executive of One Voice Wales. He has represented the Community and Town Council sector on the Ministerial Towns Action Group since June 2020. Our response to the 5 broad area identified in the Committee's terms of reference:

- **National Policy and legislation that is critical to the regeneration of towns to enable them to thrive and survive** – determining whether the legislation and Welsh Government's policy levers for regeneration are fit for purpose and focus on addressing the underlying problems facing towns. In particular, the Committee wishes to look at planning policy and the Welsh Government's Town Centres First policy.
- **Creating and sustaining local coalitions of change** – how local authorities and their local partners, including citizens and service users, are managing and regenerating towns in Wales and considering whether local authorities

and their key partners have the right skills, leadership, resources, buy-in and capacity to regenerate towns.

- **Non-domestic rates, town centre incentives and taxes** – non-domestic rates are seen as a burden on small businesses, but they also generate £1 billion for public services in Wales and are vital to the financial health of local government. The pandemic showed that local authorities working flexibly in developing incentives was critical to helping town centre businesses survive. What is there to be learned from the pandemic that can shape responses going forward.
- **The availability, management and impact of Welsh and UK Government funding for town centre regeneration** – assessing how well money is being used to regenerate town centres, and whether this represents value for money.
- **City Deals and Regional Partnerships, and Corporate Joint Committees** – is there more that can be done in the regional economic development space to help regenerate towns in Wales or do these arrangements run the risk of making things more complicated than they need to be.

... are set out below.

2.0 Background

Towns face significant environmental risks on top of the economic and social issues they have been facing for some time, including the recovery from the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic and now the need to respond to the impact of the increase in the cost of living.

Recent reports and through One Voice Wales involvement in the Ministerial Towns Action Group have highlighted that the challenges facing town centres is a complex set of issues which have been evolving over a few decades. These include:

Economic Challenges

- Town centre dereliction has become more common and is most obvious in vacant premises and buildings.
- Considerable amount of vacant and unoccupied space in and around town centres are often owned by distant organisations and individuals (and there can be issues in identifying ownership).
- Even where buildings are occupied, much of the revenue or value created from them are not felt locally due to the nature of the ownership and/or occupied use.
- The changing nature of economy/practice through the rise in online activity has comparatively increased the cost structures of operations in town centres.

- The move away from town centre living to out-of-town developments and the subsequent move of services and commercial activity.
- Town centres (especially larger ones) are comparatively difficult and more complex and expensive places in which to develop and operate either commercially or non-commercially.
- Out-of-town operations benefit from operating and development costs cheaper than in town centres, and their ease of operation on purpose-built sites also reduces costs and improves corporate or organisational performance.
- Lack of diversity and over-reliance on some sectors or uses which in turn has reduced town centre footfall and reasons to visit.
- Government funding has been short-term and limited in comparison to the scale of the problem.
- Capital-only led investment often leaves organisations struggling due to the lack of revenue to get going and survive the initial years.

Environmental Challenges

- Flood risk is increasing and is expected to increase further. Sea level rises and increased river flows are causing changes to what we know to be areas at risk of flooding. There's no avoiding the fact that many of our town centres are vulnerable to flooding, as they're located along rivers or on the coast. This can mean difficult decisions about whether development and regeneration in town centres the responsible thing is to do.
- Increased risk of flooding will have associated impacts on water quality, as well as an increased chance of local overheating, the urban heat-island effect.
- In the construction or repurposing of buildings, thought needs to be given as to how the environmental impact of the building can be minimised, how the building will be used now and how it could be used in the future, building in flexibility and adaptability from the start.
- Consideration needs to be given to what will happen to buildings once they become redundant, e.g. can the materials be reused, or recycled.
- Important ecological resources, such as trees and green spaces, are increasingly being lost from the urban environment creating a biodiversity crisis in urban areas, with some of the species that used to be widespread becoming increasingly scarce.

- Reliance on the private car has resulted in the movement of many services and activities away from town centres, increasing distance to travel and privileging one mode of private transport.

Social Challenges

- A lack of local ownership and limited sense of local community and economy can impact the sense of place and reduce its interdependence and resilience, adversely affecting general social and economic wellbeing.
- Some parts of town centres can be hard for people to access and navigate, may not encourage interaction and are not necessarily pleasant or safe spaces, with a lack of greenspace and other more social settings with streets dominated by traffic.
- Reliance on the private car has resulted in the movement of many services and activities away from town centres, increasing distance to travel and privileging one mode of private transport.
- Perceived lack of compelling reasons to visit which creates a 'disappointment/disillusionment' with some towns and town centres – some people and communities feel their town centre has little to offer them, commercially, socially, environmentally e.g. green space and culturally.
- Lack of engagement with or 'ownership' of the town centre - some people and communities feel a sense of distance from their town centre, the businesses, organisations and spaces it contains.
- Some local communities do not feel part of the decision-making around their towns with changes being “done to them”.
- Town centres are seen by many people and local communities as relational places where, people hang out, meet friends, take in cultural events, engage in voluntary activities, use local services as well as shopping – some people and communities feel that the decisions about their towns are too focused on economic transactions.

3.0 Supporting Town Centre Regeneration – a Welsh Places Charter

As a response to these challenges set out above One Voice Wales would like to bring to the attention of the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee a piece of collaborative work undertaken during the early part of 2021 and shared with all political parties in advance of the Senedd elections 2021 – a Welsh Places Charter which, if implemented, could support town centre regeneration.

The charter was created by the Welsh Places Influencing Group. One Voice Wales was part of a coalition of organisations, practitioners, and academics passionate

about creating a Wales in which people's social, economic and environmental wellbeing is at the centre of our communities.

In order to achieve this vision, the Charter sets out a number of policy recommendations which we think are critical for the Welsh Government to prioritise.

The covid-19 pandemic has exposed and accelerated problems that have long been embedded in our communities. Our town centres are struggling in the wake of declining retail sales and lockdown restrictions, and this has a knock-on effect on the environmental, economic, social and cultural well-being of Wales.

It is clear that the way in which we live, and work will not be the same as we move towards recovery, and big questions need to be asked about what we need to do to ensure that our places can not only recover but are thriving and resilient.

We believe that the answers to these questions lie within our communities, and throughout this Charter we set out a vision for a Wales where more economic power is returned to local citizens, and it is the norm for people to have a greater say in how they shape their communities.

When we talk about community, we mean a community of place and the people that live and work in that place. It is important that all communities of place are welcoming for those from diverse backgrounds and with protected characteristics, and that planners and place-based community leaders should focus on creating inclusive environments for all.

In order for Wales' places to build back better from the effects of the pandemic and economic shutdown we need to see power redistributed back to our communities.

Communities should have

- the tools to better understand their area
- the voice to represent their needs to decision makers
- the means to make a change in the places where they live and work.

The pandemic recovery presents an opportunity for us to design communities that work for people and foster health and wellbeing.

Places should:

- be co-designed with and for the needs of all people living and working there
- be well connected and promote opportunities for social interaction
- provide access to jobs, services and facilities for people
- celebrate their culture and identity

We believe that this can create a lasting impact by improving the physical environment and creating sustainable and vibrant town centres that are focused on supporting people's wellbeing.

Strong Local Democracy

The pandemic has shown us that crisis response is often best managed at a local level, yet the infrastructure is not currently in place to empower people to play an active role in shaping where they live and work during normal times.

To make this a reality, the Welsh Government should:

1. Introduce a Town and Community Council Development Fund. This would fund development officers to enable the creation of new town and community councils and support existing councils to improve how they contribute to their own local priorities.
2. Create a grant to support local authorities to introduce deliberative democracy tools such as participatory budgeting and citizens' assemblies, in order to give communities a stronger voice in local democracy.
3. Introduce a Community Enabling Fund for communities to scope and design project proposals which will help them build back better after the pandemic. This fund would support communities who often don't have the capacity to focus on bid writing and development.
4. Provide multi-annual funding frameworks for communities that are not tied to electoral cycles, and that commit to both capital and revenue funding. This would alleviate the risk of a 'cliff-edge' for projects when governments change.
5. Treat data as an essential service. Improving the collection and presentation of data at a community level would in turn strengthen the evidence-base for informed local decision making.
6. Commit to decisive measures to promote diversity. Collect and publish diversity data and establish a far-reaching Access to Elected Office Fund to include support for people from diverse backgrounds or with protected characteristics. This should include local government and town and community councils, as called for in [ERS Cymru's - A Manifesto for Democracy](#).
7. Introduce mechanisms for communities to have a greater say in decisions about land use, for example enabling Community Asset Transfers, learning from The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.
8. Establish a national programme for plural ownership. The next Welsh government should commit existing and new business development resources to develop and grow cooperatives, community businesses and social enterprises.
9. Support improved community engagement in the planning process by creating a participation framework as a baseline for planners to engage with communities:
 - increasing capacity in local authority planning teams
 - ensure effective mechanisms for digital engagement

- improving accessibility and availability of information about planning for groups who typically do not engage in the process

Wellbeing communities

The pandemic has highlighted the challenges for town centres across Wales, many towns are struggling in the wake of declining retail sales, lockdown restrictions, and changes in consumer behaviour. The recovery presents us with an opportunity to evolve our high streets and to support them to become places where people live, work and spend leisure time, as well as shop.

The Welsh Government should:

1. Stop urban sprawl by maintaining a town first approach as called for in [RTPI Cymru's - Plan the Wales we Need](#):

The planning system should:

- Ensure all town centres have a vibrant mix of retail, work, and leisure spaces
 - Continue to move homes into town centres, in a way that doesn't compromise their commercial development and viability. These homes should be high-quality, affordable, and built to the highest zero carbon standards
 - Include a focus on repurposing vacant properties in town centres in order to support community resilience and environmental sustainability.
2. Continue to support the placemaking principles outlined in the [PlacemakingWales Charter](#) by:
 - Creating towns that put people first by making 20-minute neighbourhoods a central principle in local planning, transport, health and economic policy
 - Support initiatives that improve access to green space, and bring green infrastructure and nature into town centres
 - Encourage the re-establishment of community facilities into town centres such as libraries, information points and health centres
 - Support the Welsh language and our heritage by integrating policy areas and encouraging better collaboration between linguistic and spatial planners. This would enable local planning authorities to take account of the Welsh language in land use decisions
 - Prioritise and invest in sustainable transport to high streets by integrating walking and cycling with the wider public transport network, and ensuring it serves all users equitably

- Establish an arts and culture programme for towns in Wales which supports local creative practitioners, organisations and communities to work together to develop local cultural strategies.
 - Create town centre incubators: Encourage affordable flexible spaces for pop-up uses on a temporary or seasonal basis, or for local seed ideas to be tested
3. Introduce a Future of Welsh Towns Fund. We support the Federation of Small Business Cymru's recommendation to create a [Future of Welsh Towns Fund](#) that would help every town in Wales create a strategy for its future.
 4. Support [The Rural Vision's](#) call for a "Smart Towns Initiative" to establish a fund to ensure every town in Wales enjoys improved access to digital infrastructure. This initiative should support towns and local businesses to use digital technologies to deliver services and support local businesses.

4.0 Town Partnerships – A Community Planning/Town Centre Regeneration Model for Wales: Developing a framework for sustainable place improvement and governance

This part of our submission to the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee explores the opportunity for discussion on a new way of working across and between public sector organisations, the Third Sector, and local businesses for providing a method to translate Welsh Government Policy intentions around improving approaches to collaborative working, sustainable development and local governance into manageable practice at a town centre level and offers a way of collaboration that implements a Future of Welsh Towns Fund.

There continues to be an understandable and welcome focus of the importance of 'place' in helping frame Welsh Government Actions to support the development of sustainable communities. All levels of government are challenged with 'doing more for less' to reduce inequalities in life experience and improving service responsiveness to meet increased user expectations.

Experience of current, previous and pilot programmes such as Communities First, Vibrant Places and Cynefin highlight the vital position of any targeted actions being located within a clear framework of an area wider needs and, importantly, securing the widest network of collaboration in making a difference to local prospects.

The adoption of the Well Being of Future Generations Act with the requirement for the production of Local Well Being Plans and wider Public Service Board membership will further encourage development of holistic, sustainable approach to tackling local needs, better linking the distinct goals for wellbeing set out in the legislation. Bringing the significant impact of the Act to life at a level where it can be seen to be making a difference to people's everyday lives will be vital. Additionally, the Planning Act and Environment Act introduce the potential for new thinking about locality and place in a more integrated way.

Locality and Place

Identity with a locality is a really significant driver for delivering or discouraging effective collaboration. Having a shared, identifiable understanding of local needs and feeling able to influence local improvement are vital to engaging collective action to make things better.

With the potential for increasing regional structures the need to identify an effective method of harnessing a rational, inclusive method of determining local priorities and giving voice to all parts of civil society becomes self evident.

A Proposed Approach

We feel that in this time of significant challenge for public service delivery and potential structural change at the regional level there is a need to test potential models of securing more collaborative place governance. Such an approach would seek to bring together community and town council, local third sector organisations, businesses and communities.

One model that has been tested is the 'Whole Place' approach – indeed more recently some town and community councils have identified that undertaking a comprehensive needs assessment and consultation around community needs, using this type of model, might represent a good way to set out their response to the new duty placed on them by the Well Being of Future Generations Act. For example, Penarth Town Council has developed a Place Plan for their area in recent years.

Collaboration for Connected Places

There is an opportunity to set out the basis for a stronger partnership between community and town councils, the Third Sector and local businesses combining the democratic perspective of elected representatives and the active participation of the voluntary groups and local organisations.

There is a growing opportunity for the Third Sector and local businesses to work collaboratively with Community and Town Councils, particularly in increasing community engagement and delivering the goals of the WFG Act. There are some good examples of the efforts to build local links such as through GAVO, the Gwent CVC, who recently ran a programme to support the transfer of assets to the community which has involved councils in Gwent.

In short there is opportunity to turn the existing community planning system on its head and build from the bottom up as opposed to the top-down policy models which have been dominant. In simple terms it is putting the focus on community led plans designed to meet local needs. This approach would complement the top-down strategic structures by providing a mechanism for harnessing the skills and capacity at the very local level.

The former Future Generations Commissioner in coordinating the national conversation on the Wales We Want recognised the feeling of disconnect from decision making, the lack of engagement between the community and the decision-makers - particularly evident in the views of young people. Community leaders who are passionate and ambitious about the success of their communities reported on their successes but also their feelings of frustrations, isolation, and the dangers of burn out due to the challenges of the system. It was response like this which led to the principle of citizen involvement being key in the new Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

There are local examples that point the way forward. The Llanelli We Want has developed into an important model, led by the Town Council establishing the Llanelli Community Partnership and connecting the various voluntary sector developments across the town. Such initiatives highlight the potential of a joined-up community-led approach that is based on local needs and priorities, connecting the separate funding streams and independent approaches of different organisations to focus on “pride, place and people.”

This is mirrored by the Place Plan led by Llanelli Rural District Council and the community development work of the “big 6” town and community councils across Carmarthenshire; who are now working closely with the County Council in the Wellbeing Assessments and plans required by the Public Service Boards under the WFG Act. It is the perhaps the beginning of a recognition that area town and community councils have a better sense of what is needed.

The role of the democratically accountable body is critical in all these models - there has to be this connection between participative and democratic action. It involves best practice in place planning, with citizen involvement – not easy and needs both hard yards and some degree of expertise – in creating locally owned visions, building on local assets, establishing practical projects and programmes, which leverage the local precept.

This should be the preferred model that should be supported by funders - Big Lottery, Foundations, Business and Government going forward. We need less of the top down national programmes parachuting into local communities on short term contracts and more support for community led projects that can meet local needs for the long term.

This builds on the best practice of local Community and Town Councils where there is:

- Involvement of local people – led through a Community Partnership – in setting a long term vision, identifying local needs and priorities for improving community wellbeing
- To shape the local place plan, which provides the basis for the investment of the precept and focus for volunteer action
- And the platform for funding bids to external bodies such as lottery, foundations, business and other public sector sources

- With annual reporting back on progress

The importance of building strong local resilient communities was at the heart of the Wales we Want – where there is greater local energy production and consumption; more local food production, and where more money circulates within the local economy with social businesses playing a key role in meeting local needs - enabling economies to be built on local assets, localising supply chains and supporting local entrepreneurship and giving the key role to local communities in respect of natural resources and the importance of local green space.

The opportunity is clear - that One Voice Wales, WCVA, Federation of Small Businesses and a range of sector support providers have a key role to ensure that we can maximise the benefits for our communities, through:

- Putting support for a place-based community planning model approach at the heart of our strategies
- Increasing scale and impact of social action through volunteering – particularly through engaging young people
- Building the capacity and skills of those community development coordinators and community leaders working on the front line
- Ensuring funding streams are better focussed and linked to local priorities
- Post Brexit models Post Community First and are based on best practice of community led development

We know there is not a one size fits all approach but in general, communities succeed when they are in control, as this sense of ownership increases participation, improves prioritisation of local problems, creates community spirit and builds trust and a belief in the delivery vehicle for community change.

What is a Town Partnership Plan?

A Town Partnership Plan will be 'holistic' or comprehensive in scope. They should set out a vision for how a community wants to develop, and identify the action needed to achieve it. They can include everything that is relevant to the people who live and work in the community from employment and playgrounds to the design of new buildings and protection of the local environment and heritage to tourism and youth and older persons support. They can include any social, environmental or economic issues. Importantly it will be upto the community to decide what is important to them.

Town Partnership Plans will have the potential to influence a wide range of organisations and processes which affect the lives of communities. They should complement and help deliver local planning policies and frameworks but they cannot override adopted planning policy. They should influence local housing and land management strategies. They should also contribute to the way local services are managed and delivered.

A Town Partnership Plan will provide a statement of how the community sees itself developing over the next few years. It:

- reflects the views of all sections of the community;
- identifies which features and local characteristics people value;
- identifies local problems and opportunities;
- spells out how residents want the community to develop in the future;
- prepares a plan of action to achieve this vision.

Who decides?

The Town Partnership Plan gives everyone a chance to say what they think about the social, economic and environmental issues affecting their community, and how they'd like to see it improved in the future. It is important that the whole community is involved in producing the plan, not just those people who usually come along to community or town council meetings.

The vehicle for the commissioning and delivery of the Town Partnership Plan would be via a Community Partnership with representation from the community or town council, third sector and local business plus co-opted individual with specific skills to support the partnerships work.

What's it leading to?

The Town Partnership Plan needs to consider local problems and opportunities as a whole. It makes the links between these issues and sets out a broad vision for the future – where the community or town wants to be in 5 or 10 years time. But achieving this vision will require action. This includes both:

- action which the community or town itself proposes to undertake;
- policies, decisions and action carried out by other bodies which the plan might influence.

What does the plan look like?

There is no standard format for a Town partnership Plan and no prescriptive list of the subjects it should address. It is up to the community to set out its vision, decide which issues it would like to tackle, agree priorities for action and present the information in a way that is interesting and attractive to everyone.

A practical way to present the plan could be in two parts:

- A detailed report explaining how the consultation has been carried out and conclusions drawn. It could take various forms, including photographs, documents, sketches or even a video.
- A succinct Action Plan clearly setting out what needs doing, when, why, by whom and at what cost.

Hasn't this been done before?

Many community or town councils have had experience of producing a community-led action plan such as Penarth Town, Llanelli Town Council and Gwernymynedd

each with their own approach – but not necessarily working collaboratively with the third sector and local business to develop a jointly agreed approach to address local needs. A Community Plan will bring all this together and create a basis for action in future. But as stressed above collaboration will be key - it is important to review and consult the whole community to make sure the issues and actions identified in previous surveys are still relevant, especially if previous action plans were produced many years before.

Summary

- Town Partnership Plans will be local, action-based plans which address a range of problems and opportunities affecting local communities.
- They can include social, economic and environmental issues.
- The whole community should be involved in producing the Town Partnership Plan, with the community or town council taking lead responsibility for organising, resourcing and supporting the establishment of local ‘Community Partnerships’.
- The Town Partnership Plan must be consistent with related policies set out in the local authority’s planning documents and local strategic partnerships ie the Public Service Board Local Wellbeing Plans
- The plan should be based on information provided through survey, research, consultation and community participation.
- A grant to assist with the production of Town Partnership Plans should be made available from Welsh Government. Advice and help with producing the plan and involving the community would be resourced from the community or town council.
- Community Plans should identify actions which can be taken forward by the community or town council, by other individuals and groups within the community, local businesses or by other service providers and statutory bodies via a ‘Community Partnership’. These should have a clear focus on Who? What? Why? How? When?

One Voice Wales Town Centre Regeneration inquiry response – further comments

Policy and solutions fallen short

Town centre regeneration remains a national priority, but the Welsh Government’s ‘town-centre-first’ policy is not yet fully embedded and at the present time has fallen short of addressing the many problems in our town centres. National and local government need to deliver integrated local solutions and make brave decisions going forward.

Skills and Capacity

The impact of ten years of austerity and reductions in local government funding has seen depletion in regeneration capacity and skills. Given this reduction in capacity, local authorities need to work more closely with a broad range of partners; the wider public sector, housing associations, the third sector, and Community and Town Councils, especially where their intervention might be of a smaller scale or plays to a specific set of skills and/or responsibilities.

In terms of the specific terms of reference headings:

National Policy and legislation that is critical to the regeneration of towns to enable them to thrive and survive – *determining whether the legislation and Welsh Government’s policy levers for regeneration are fit for purpose and focus on addressing the underlying problems facing towns. In particular, the Committee wishes to look at planning policy and the Welsh*

Whilst the Audit Wales Report does a good job of reminding policy makers of the dangers of relying on the recent past in terms of vision; its main message is the weak institutional/organisational platforms presently in place to implement policy. In terms of a more holistic view of the variety of policy response needed the Welsh Governments’ own “A Better Wales” does a better job of indicating the paradigm shift needed in terms of vision and the policy implications. Without however addressing specifics of the arrangements/models for policy implementation and the repurposing of town centres. As the Minister says in the Introduction-

“This cannot be done by us working alone. The development industry, local planning authorities, public bodies, the third sector and the Welsh Government, need to work together to achieve this, recognising that change is needed.”

Whilst A Better Wales scopes the areas to address it does not cover technical detail and the need to apply measures in a coordinated way. Some clues to the policy adjustment necessary, involving Planning Input, can be seen in the UK Levelling up Bill e.g. Supplementary Plans, commencement and completion notices and CPO regeneration rationale.

Creating and sustaining local coalitions of change – *how local authorities and their local partners, including citizens and service users, are managing and regenerating towns in Wales and considering whether local authorities and their key partners have the right skills, leadership, resources, buy-in and capacity to regenerate towns.*

Audit Wales report indicate the series of funding initiatives since 2014. After an initial attempt at partnership working in 2014 a series of alternative funding models were attempted. Effective partnerships may have been sustained in only a few towns in Wales, for example Llanelli.

Despite the relative initial failure of a funded partnership model, Audit Wales is very clear about what is required - collaboration among elements of the Local Community working together and the need for Leadership eg Town Partnership model.

Local experience suggests that the pandemic signalled the need for change for effective Place Making ie the potential for Town Partnership models as set out above. It also meant the redirection of staff to administering furlough and other emergency measures. This redeployment underlined the chronic shortage of regeneration\planning staff if the holistic fine grain work anticipated here is to have an chance.

Audit Wales besides pointing to the leadership role of principal Local Authorities, identifies existing platforms through which the wider local community might be engaged. Place Plans and BIDs. The two are not mutually exclusive. One Voice Wales view is that Town Partnership models as set out above provide a vehicle for town centre regeneration.

The availability, management and impact of Welsh and UK Government funding for town centre regeneration – assessing how well money is being used to regenerate town centres, and whether this represents value for money.

Wales Audit report highlights the variety and time limited funding streams from 2014.

It follows from the above that funding should respect the variety of local circumstances and that rather than found specific captial schemes or approaches it funds a partnership who determine priorities based on a place making commitment, recognising the pressures identified in the various reports and the need for change.

City Deals and Regional Partnerships, and Corporate Joint Committees – is there more that can be done in the regional economic development space to help regenerate towns in Wales or do these arrangements run the risk of making things more complicated than they need to be.

Additional guidance should be issued to the CJC's to ensure that their exiting Committee membership has the expertise to support Town Centre first approaches to regional development. Failing this they use their co-option powers to install that expertise on the Committee. Relying on an expert advisor arrangement would be insufficient although probably also necessary.

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