Cyd-bwyllgor Corfforedig De-Ddwyrain Cymru | South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee

South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee

09.00am on Monday 26 January 2026
At Sbarc, Cardiff and via Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Members	Constituent Authority
Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby (Chair)	Leader, Monmouthshire County Council
Councillor Dimitri Batrouni	Leader, Newport City Council
Councillor Lis Burnett	Leader, Vale of Glamorgan Council
Councillor Brent Carter	Leader, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Councillor Jane Gebbie	Deputy Leader, Bridgend County Borough Council
Councillor Anthony Hunt (Deputy Chair)	Leader, Torfaen County Borough Council
Councillor Andrew Morgan	Leader, Leader, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Councillor James Pritchard	Leader, Caerphilly County Borough Council
Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe	Chair of Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority
Councillor Huw Thomas (Deputy Chair)	Leader, Cardiff Council
Councillor Stephen Thomas	Leader, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Officers	
Kellie Beirne	Chief Executive
Liam Hull	Strategic Director of Resources and S151 Officer
Colan Mehaffey	Strategic Director of Policy, Impact and Partnerships
Mike Brough	Strategic Director, Regional Growth and Investment
Mark Watkins	Strategic Director, Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Jill Byron	Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Cliona May	Democratic Services Manager
Nicola Butler	Democratic Services Officer
Jonathan Deacon	Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Cllr John Spanswick, Leader of Bridgend County Borough Council. Cllr Spanswick was substituted by Cllr Jane Gebbie.

1.2 Cllr Hunt advised those present during the meeting that Cllr Spanswick's mother had sadly passed away recently. Members expressed their sympathies.

2. Declarations of Interests

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

3.1 It was **RESOLVED** that the CJC **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting of the CJC held on 15 December 2025 as a true and accurate record.

3.2 Kellie Beirne addressed Members on the action set out in paragraph 6.7 of the minutes of the December meeting relating to the CCR Energy report. A written update would be circulated to Members later this week. There were also current discussions with the CCR Energy Board to provide a bi-weekly shareholder update.

4. Annual Budget 2026/27

4.1 Mr Hull, presenting the report, indicated that as with previous years, the outlook was challenging. Whilst one off payments had been provided by Welsh Government, the CJC did not receive any core funding. Setting a budget each year whilst simultaneously attempting to build the financial resilience of a new public body was particularly difficult.

4.2 It was explained by Mr Hull that in the last financial year substantial work had been undertaken to develop an organisational structure that adequately resourced the public body. The current year's budget was in more of a settled state and built on the foundations set last year. The total budget requirement for the year was just short of £7.7m. The draft budget showed an increase of 14% against the current year budget. Mr Hull commented that whilst this seemed like a fairly large increase, it needed to be viewed in the context of additional responsibilities being given to the CJC, including around regional transport and the Local Innovation Partnership Fund (LIPF). The additional responsibilities brought some capacity challenges for the organisation but was also offset to some degree by additional income received as part of the responsibilities. There was a minimal net impact on the budget.

4.3 Members noted that external audit fees had increased due to the amount of work required by Audit Wales both on the financial and performance audits for the CJC following the establishment of the organisation as a public body.

4.4 Mr Hull mentioned that there was a modest increase in the organisation's reliance on Treasury Management revenue contributions of £1.468m. He added that there

was an analysis within the report which demonstrated how this was achievable in the medium term but it should be seen as an option of last resort as it inhibited the organisation's ability to build its financial resilience. The budget also proposed a 5% increase in local authority contributions. This provided the CJC with an additional £70k in total income split across the 10 Constituent Councils. Mr Hull assured Members that this had been discussed in advance with the Leaders and S151 officers of the local authorities.

4.5 Mr Hull reported that a Medium Term Financial Plan would be developed and brought to a future CJC meeting prior to the end of the financial year. He referred to the Plan being likely to show a funding gap in the medium term if the CJC was to adequately meet all of its statutory duties. The longer term considerations needed to be shared via continued discussions with the Welsh Government around core funding alongside independent advice on the capacity requirements to run a public body of this nature.

4.6 Mr Hull also referred to the report setting out the proposed 2026/27 Wider Investment Fund (WIF) budget, with the indicative programme to 2029/30 also included. The WIF budget stood at £62.762m. There was a requirement for local authority / Constituent Councils contributions of £5.168m within this.

4.7 The Chair observed that the funding gap had been discussed by the CJC for some time and that thought needed to be given to how via the Medium Term Financial Plan there could be a closure of that gap. Cllr Hunt welcomed the budget report. He noted the tightness of the budget and emphasised that a key discussion around the Medium Term Financial Plan would be keeping costs down whilst moving the region forward.

4.8 It was **RESOLVED** that the CJC:

1) Approved the 2026/27 Operational Budget of £7,669,570;
2) Approved the utilisation of £1,486,830 Treasury Management Revenue Contribution;
3) Approved Local Authority contributions of £1,342,912 to include a 5% increase on 2025/26 contributions;
4) Approved Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority (BBNPA) contributions of £3,040;
5) Approved the proposed 2026/27 Wider Investment Fund budget & indicative programme to 2029/30 as set out in the report; and,
6) Noted that a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) will be brought to a future meeting of the CJC.

5. Annual Business Plan 2026/27

5.1 Colan Mehaffey presented the report. He highlighted the key themes, including the full adoption of the statutory duties such as regional transport and strategic development. There were new programmes entering delivery, including Investment Zone and LIPF. There was also a re-alignment to the CJC's Economic Wellbeing statement and objectives as it was an appropriate time to do so given the organisation's status as a new public body. This set out that CCR would 'work in partnership to foster a regional economy that is stronger, fairer, and greener, generating good growth and creating conditions for shared prosperity across our

ten local authorities'. Beneath this sat 3 main objectives which were to 'Grow the Regional Economy', 'Create the Conditions for Shared Prosperity' and 'Invest in the Region's Green Future'.

5.2 Mr Mehaffey spoke of the Annual Business Plan setting out for each of the main objectives the key activities that would be undertaken for 2026/27 to progress them. Included for 'Grow the Regional Economy' was the recently launched CCR Investment Vision to drive investment into the region. 'Create the Conditions for Shared Prosperity' included delivery of the first year of five of the Regional Transport Plan, to ensure access to opportunity for people around the region and also the Strategic Development Plan, providing a regional vision and initiating collaborative regional studies to inform a 25-year plan. There was also the second iteration of the Housing Viability Gap Fund, in order to deliver housing in areas of greatest need. There would also be development of an Innovation Skills programme complementing existing provision, with academic and vocational partners to meet future skills needs. 'Invest in the Region's Green Future' included completing demolition at Aberthaw and the aim to publish findings on tidal range energy commercial demonstrators in the Severn Estuary which was work which had been undertaken with the West of England Combined Authority. Mr Mehaffey added this was a significant initiative to understand how new sources of renewable sources of energy could be created for the region.

5.3 The process of managing delivery was also explained by Mr Mehaffey. This plan contained an overview of governance arrangements and recognised the need to further embed the Constitution and committee arrangements with targeted member and officer training being part of that. There was also a Budgets and Funding Strategy which recognised the reliance of interest on balances to fund the operational budget and that serious consideration must be given to how the statutory responsibilities of the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee can be funded sustainably. There was also an enhanced draft organisational performance framework which was identified following work with Audit Wales.

5.4 Mr Mehaffey stated that in parallel there would be development of a new corporate plan through the new 'CCR at 10' initiative, referenced in the Annual Business Plan. Professor Greg Clark would help lead CCR through a process of reviewing what had been achieved over the last 10 years and lessons to be learnt and then looking forward to the next 10 years. He added that it was intended to bring a report to CJC relating to the initiative.

5.5 CJC Members made a number of points in response to the report, including the following:

- The Chair emphasised the need to have strong governance arrangements and putting in place a strong performance framework.
- Cllr Burnett welcomed the Annual Business Plan and stated that effective synergy was required in respect of the 3 main objectives. Growing the Regional Economy could not be done in isolation. Both the Regional Transport Plan and the Strategic Development Plan would support the ambition. Deprivation analysis needed to include specific individual factors with digital connectivity being a key area of deprivation. With the move towards a green infrastructure there needed to be the appropriate transport and well paid, skilled jobs available.

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- Cllr Hunt made the point that the Plan needed to be used effectively to focus on delivery monitoring, data evaluation and improvement. He also stressed the importance of communicating local impacts, including with residents. Mr Mehaffey mentioned CCR's formal public engagement strategy and that the aim was to do more campaigns and reach wider audiences.
- Cllr Batrouni welcomed the Annual Business Plan and asked whether gross disposable income was being measured and what was happening in relation to this metric in each of the local authorities. He also requested whether intelligence or analytics could be developed in relation to the new economy. Mr Mehaffey responded that CCR was developing the data dashboard and gross disposable income could be seen at a local level. Business data had also been received in relation to commissioning of LIPF work, including on sectoral focus.

5.6 It was **RESOLVED** that the CJC approved the Annual Business Plan for 2026/27 set out at Appendix 1 of the report, noting the Annual Budget Report for 2026/27 which was summarised within the report and was set out separately on the agenda.

6. Month 7 Budget Monitoring Report

6.1 Members received a report setting out the CJC's Revenue Budget position as at 31 October 2025 (Month 07). Liam Hull, presenting the report, stated that Members would recall that there had been a significant underspend against employee costs. This had been due to a staged approach to recruitment.

6.2 Mr Hull spoke of the recruitment underspend being partially offset by interim employee costs in Legal and Governance department due to the specific challenges of recruiting permanently there. Overall, there was a projected underspend for the year of £535k against a total budget of just shy of £6.7m.

6.3 Members were also advised that the CJC had received additional one-off funds from the Welsh Government this financial year. Mr Hull advised that there was a projected drawdown of accumulated interest on balances of £588k, which was £701k less than the budgeted figure of £1.289m. This would allow the retained balances to be put to use in future and increase the financial resilience of the CJC.

6.4 In response to a question from Cllr Hunt, Mr Hull explained that the senior leadership roles had been recruited first so that the appointees could develop their own team. The fact that the CJC still had approximately 15% vacancies whilst recruitment was still ongoing did bring some additional pressures. He added that staff wellbeing was being monitored from a HR perspective.

6.5 It was **RESOLVED** that the CJC:

1) Noted the Revenue Budget position as at the 31 October 2025 (Month 07) as set out in the report; and,
2) Noted that regular budget updates would be provided to the Committee throughout the year.

7. Local Innovation Partnership

7.1 The CJC was provided with an update on the development of the LIPF and confirmation of the governance arrangements for the establishment of the regional Innovation Partnership which would support both the LIPF and Investment Zone (IZ) programmes. Mark Watkins, presenting the report, referred to this update following the CJC's endorsement of the approach to the development of CCR's LIPF and support, in principle, of the formation of a regional "Innovation Partnership" to provide the required local partnership function at the meeting in November 2025.

7.2 Mr Watkins brought to the Member's attention that after the briefing meeting held the previous week, officers had contacted UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and there had been a couple of changes to the governance arrangements. Firstly, the Terms of Reference had been tweaked to provide decision making authority regarding innovation related work programmes. Secondly, in line with feedback from Members and accepted by UKRI, there would be 2 elected members who would be appointed to the Innovation Partnership to provide democratic oversight and accountability.

7.3 The Chair welcomed the update and commented that it was exceptionally important that there was Member oversight and insight in relation to the regional funds.

7.4 It was **RESOLVED** that the CJC:

1) Approved the updated Terms of Reference for the Innovation Partnership;
2) Approved the updated proposed membership profile and appointment process for the Innovation Partnership, including the approach to co-opting additional experts where required for specific programmes;
3) Delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer to update the Constitution in order to incorporate the Innovation Partnership; and,
4) Noted and endorse the proposed timetable for establishing the Innovation Partnership and convening its first meeting in advance of key LIPF milestones.

8. Appointments Panel

8.1 Members received a report which sought the CJC's ratification of the appointment of Jill Byron as the Director of Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer following a recommendation made by the Appointments Sub-Committee (which had comprised Cllr Brocklesby as Chair, Cllr Batrouni and Cllr Stephen Thomas) on 16 January 2026. Members were advised by Kellie Beirne that the recommendation to appoint Ms Byron followed a comprehensive assessment centre process which was undertaken with independent input and support. Ms Beirne mentioned that Ms Byron was already in the role of Head of Legal and that she has significant experience in local authorities and the university sector. Ms Beirne also thanked Mark Watkins who had been in the role of the Director of Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer on an interim basis.

8.2 The CJC approved the recommendation of the Appointments Sub-Committee, to appoint Jill Byron as Strategic Director of Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer. The Chair congratulated Ms Byron and stated that she looked forward to continuing to work with her. She also thanked Mr Watkins for all the work he had done during a challenging time for the organisation and wished him well as he was due to leave CCR at the end of the week.

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8.3 It was **RESOLVED** that the CJC approved the recommendation of the Appointments Sub-Committee, to appoint Jill Byron as Strategic Director of Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer.

NOTE: Jill Byron and her Legal and Governance team colleagues left the meeting whilst the matter was being considered and took no part in the discussion prior to the decision being taken.

Exclusion of Press and Public

The SEW CJC **RESOLVED** that the public and press be asked to leave the meeting during discussion of the remaining items of business because exempt information as defined in Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 is likely to be made known.

NOTE: In accordance to the Standing Orders in relation to the delivery of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority was not represented during the Exempt Session.

EXEMPT SESSION

9. Strategic Premises Fund – Investment Strategy Update

9.1 Mike Brough presented the report.

9.2 It was **RESOLVED** that the CJC approved the recommendations in the report.

10. Investment Zone – Gateway Process

10.1 Mike Brough presented the report.

10.2 It was **RESOLVED** that the CJC approved the recommendations in the report.

11. Investment & Intervention Framework - Business Cases

11.1 Mike Brough presented the report.

11.2 It was **RESOLVED** that the CJC noted the recommendations in the report.

Meeting end: 10.17am

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