

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 22ND FEBRUARY 2021

REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 20TH JANUARY 2021

“370 CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEES – RESPONSE TO WELSH
GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION (REF) –

Cabinet, on 21st December, 2020, had referred the report to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration, with it being noted that a response to the current consultation was required by Welsh Government (WG) by 4th January, 2021 with the caveat that any additional recommendations be reported back to Cabinet for further consideration in advance of submission to Welsh Government as an addendum, if necessary and appropriate. The report set out the various elements of proposals by WG to introduce four Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs). The Managing Director, by way of presenting the report, referred to a PowerPoint presentation.

Some Members considered that the proposals, in their view, were WG reforming Local Government “by the back door”.

Councillor Thomas drew attention to his time as Leader of the Council when such proposals were being suggested and, along with other Leaders, had raised concern around the amount of additional work and responsibility that such proposals would place on Council Leaders. Councillor Dr. Johnson’s concern related to the implications for smaller Councils and how they would be appropriately represented. His party had been reluctant to support regional committees as, in their view, it was anti-democratic. Councillor Ms. Sivagnanam commented that she was in favour of Wales working on a regional basis but echoed some of the concerns raised by other Members as outlined above.

The Leader, Councillor N. Moore, not a Member of the Committee, with permission to speak, stated that considerable discussion in respect of such proposals had been taking place for some time and took the opportunity to reassure the Committee that representations and discussions had been held with other Leaders, but WG were pursuing the proposals. Councillor King, not a Member of the Committee, with permission to speak, stated that he too shared the concerns expressed by some Members at the meeting, but capacity and resource issues in Local Authorities to deliver some major projects was limited.

The Chairman commented on the work of the City Deal project, stating that in his view, the City Deal had been largely invisible and with a lack of Scrutiny. The Leader, in response, advised that was one of the reasons he had requested that the minutes of City Deal meetings be reported to Cabinet. The Chairman also referred to the bureaucracy in running such bodies, the auditing requirements and resourcing

implications. The Monitoring Officer advised that with regard to the role of Scrutiny proposed for CJs, further regulations were awaited.

The Managing Director, in referring to the response within the report, advised that a lot of work had already been done and as such the direction of travel was already in existence, advising that the City Deal project itself addressed transport issues. School Improvement was being undertaken on a regional basis via the Central South Consortium and that Strategic Development Planning was already legislated for. The issue in relation to Leaders of Councils, staff capacity and resilience had also been referred to within the consultation response.

Following the discussions the Leader stated that in the main the comments made at Committee had, in his view, been included within the response and as the Bill was due to receive Royal Assent shortly, the Council would have to work with the proposals for CJs to the best of its ability. In referring to financial resources, he advised that the Minister had agreed a set of initial costs but it would be ongoing revenue costs that would be the issue for Local Authorities.

Having considered the report, the Scrutiny Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the comments / views as outlined above and detailed below be referred to Cabinet and Welsh Government as appropriate –

- Some Members' views that CJs were a reform of Local Government by the back door,
- Increased workload and responsibilities for Council Leaders which could impact on their own Local Authority's work,
- Lack of detail in relation to the Scrutiny of CJs which had also not been recognised through legislation for other collaborations e.g. CSC and the challenges they had faced as a result,
- Internal and external bureaucratic implications,
- Financial impact and resources and staff resilience on Local Authorities.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the discussions at the meeting and to advise Cabinet of the Committee's views."