

Dyddiad /Date:
Gofynnwch am/Please ask for:
Llinell uniongyrchol/Direct line:
Ebost/Email:

8th January 2021
Daniel Hurford
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Julie James MS
Minister for Housing and Local Government
Welsh Government
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA



Dear Julie,

Draft Regulations to Establish Corporate Joint Committees

Please find enclosed the WLGA's response to the consultation on the draft Regulations to Establish Corporate Joint Committees.

Leaders have welcomed your approach to engagement during the past 18 months, particularly the regular, open dialogue during the COVID 19 response. Given our focus on the pandemic, we have not had the opportunity to consider and discuss the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill nor the CJC reforms as much as we had originally anticipated at the beginning of the year.

Whilst several leaders have regarded CJs as an evolution from existing City and Growth Deal arrangements, there has been disagreement with the 'mandation' of CJs and there remain concerns about the additional burdens, bureaucracy and costs of CJs and the diminution of local democracy and accountability with a new tier of regional government.

You will be aware that the CJs concept is therefore not universally supported across the 22 local authorities and we have had several challenging debates with you and within the WLGA about the proposed reforms. The WLGA Council resolved in November 2019 that it had '...fundamental concerns over the principle of mandation which is seen as undermining local democracy but will continue to engage and seek to co-produce the Corporate Joint Committee proposals.'

In line with the WLGA Council resolution however, leaders, professional groups and the WLGA have sought to engage constructively with you and your officials when discussing the CJC reforms. We have been keen to ensure that the regulations should provide sufficient discretion and flexibility to build on what works already within councils' existing collaborative arrangements.

Dr Chris Llewelyn
Prif Weithredwr
Chief Executive

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**Croesawn ohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg a byddwn yn ymateb i ohebiaeth yn yr un iaith.
Ni fydd defnyddio'r naill iaith na'r llall yn arwain at oedi.**



We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English and will respond to correspondence in the same language.
Use of either language will not lead to a delay.

In our discussions you have provided reassurance that the proposed CJC arrangements seek to replace and streamline existing strategic arrangements and that the membership of CJs will be determined by local government. The regulations should not constrain the ambition or innovation already demonstrated by local government through the city and growth deals. As CJs will be part of the local government family and will be led by council leaders, it is important that they should be given freedom to reflect the needs and priorities of the constituent authorities and should not be directed by Welsh Government.

One of the main concerns raised by several authorities is the impact a new tier of regional governance will have on local accountability and local democratic oversight. At the same time, regional decision-making powers vested in leaders on CJs will also place additional burden, responsibilities and risks on them as individuals. It is therefore important that the new CJC governance arrangements ensure adequate links into constituent authorities through cabinets and scrutiny arrangements. Councils will also need to continue to consider key matters before leaders take any collective decisions on CJs, as is the current approach with city and growth deal decision-making.

The proposed CJC timescales remain challenging, particularly as we continue to focus our resources in responding to the ongoing pandemic. We therefore welcome your offer to provide support, including set up costs, for CJs. We look forward to continuing our constructive dialogue with you to ensure these new arrangements build on the collaborative foundations laid by councils and that CJs and the Welsh Government's expectations and engagement with CJs reflect, respect and respond to local democratic priorities.

Yours sincerely,

	
Cllr Andrew Morgan WLGA Leader	Cllr Peter Fox OBE WLGA Conservative Group Leader
	
Cllr Emlyn Dole WLGA Plaid Cymru Group Leader	Cllr Hugh Evans OBE WLGA Independent Group Leader

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