Social Partnership Duty Annual Report
North Wales Corporate Joint Committee
April 2024 – March 25

1. Introduction

1.1 This inaugural report of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (NWCJC) will outline its initial assessment of compliance with the Social Partnership Duty during its pre-transfer stage prior to 1st April 2025 for the year 2024-25.

1.2 The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 (the "SPPP Act"), which came into force on 1 April 2024, requires public bodies to produce an annual report to show how they have complied with the Social Partnership Duty established by the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act.

1.3 The Social Partnership Duty requires the NWCJC to seek a consensus or compromise with their recognised trade unions, when they:

i. their well-being objectives; and
ii. determine make strategic decisions about the reasonable steps they intend to take to achieve those objectives.

1.4 Section 16(2) of the Act sets out a number of specific requirements relating to the Duty, which a public body must comply with when "seeking a consensus or compromise".

1.5 To seek a consensus or compromise, a public body must involve its recognised trade unions or other representatives of its staff in the process of setting objectives or making decisions, by (specifically):

i. consulting with them in the early stage of the process, and
ii. including them throughout the process by:

a. providing sufficient information for them to be able to give due consideration to what is proposed, and
b. providing sufficient time for them to consider what is proposed and respond appropriately.

1.6 According to Section 18 of the Act:

i. A public body must prepare, for each financial year, a report of what it has done to comply with the duty.
ii. The report must be agreed with recognised trade unions or include a statement explaining why it was not agreed.
iii. The public body must publish the report, and submit it to the Social Partnership Council, as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of the financial year.

2. Background

2.1 In addition to duties under the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act, there are requirements within other Acts such as the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Local Government and Elections Act to consult with different cohorts (including staff).

2.2 It is important to note for the purposes of this report that during the period of this report there were no staff permanently employed within the NWCJC. Prior to 1 April a considerable amount of preparation was undertaken to secure the transfer of the Portfolio Management Office (PMO) staff, along with funding and assets. The work was supported by the host Authority, Cyngor Gwynedd, who provided staff to undertake key statutory and back-office functions, and to deliver the transfer. Following the transfer the CJC will recruit its Chief Executive and commence implementation of its transformation plan including recruitment of staff.

2.3 The PMO and NWCJC is hosted by Cyngor Gwynedd, where a Liaison Group between the Council and the trade unions has been established /operational for a number of years, to reinforce the healthy relationship that has largely existed for more than a decade. This forum meets approximately every 6 weeks. The aim of this group is to place emphasis on maintaining good working relationships between the Council and the Trade Unions, proactively discussing and resolving constituent employment issues, as well as handling and discussing the development of local working conditions and other employment initiatives. The meetings are chaired by the Human Resources Service Manager and include representation from the Council (HR Service Manager, Health, Safety and Well-being Service Manager, human resources officers) and representatives from the Trade Unions (GMB, UNISON and Unite).

2.4 The trade unions recognised by our host authority Cyngor Gwynedd are:

- GMB
- UNISON
- Unite

2.5 Consultation with those Trade Unions referenced in 2.4 was undertaken as part of the transfer process through HR Services at Cyngor Gwynedd. Extensive communication and support were provided to those staff who were caught within TUPE, and included collaborative work on terms and conditions, benefits and the development of the CJC's pay policy. Post transition, the NWCJC is developing its staffing cohort and partnerships along with its relationship with trade unions.

3. How we met/complied with the Social Partnership Duty

3.1 The NWCJC has yet to produce its Well-being Objectives which will form part of any future Corporate Plan agreement. Following transfer and ability to recruit key resources, this work will be undertaken in consultation with the Commissioners office and our partners.

3.2 We developed positive partnership working to support a successful transfer of the PMO having worked with Cyngor Gwynedd HR Services Manager in partnership with Trade Unions.

3.3 We actively participated (where required) in the corporate Liaison Group between Cyngor Gwynedd and the trade unions, which meets approximately every 6 weeks to discuss employment issues.

3.4 Through a formal Service Level Agreement post transfer the inclusion of trade union engagement will be facilitated by HR services.

3.5 It is accepted that our approach to the Social Partnership will be further developed in 2025/26 as it remains a process of learning and evolving. This will include:

- Our goal is to embed the principle of social partnership in everything we do. As part of this commitment over the next year we will put steps in place to strengthen our contribution, including:

- Appointing a Chief Executive, as referenced above, along with senior managerial positions and key officers to meet statutory requirements.
- Raising awareness of the requirements arising from the SPPP Act to provide opportunity to develop how we meet the requirement.
- Provide learning and development of the duty for officers through Learning@Wales to promote this awareness across the organisation.
- Establish a direct forum between the NWCJC and Trade Union representatives to promote collaboration and address workforce challenges effectively.
- Recruit resource capacity and capability to develop Wellbeing Objectives for consideration by key stakeholders.
- Proactively engage with staff and unions in the process of developing the Wellbeing Objectives.
- Actively involve staff and the unions in the future drafting process of the review of the NWCJC Corporate Plan by sharing a draft and allowing them to submit recommendations and comments for consideration by the NWCJC prior to adoption. (date TBC)
- Engage with peer organisations, other public sector bodies and relevant networks to promote learning and access and embed sector best practice.