



Report of the Corporate Director (Resources)

Scrutiny Inquiry Panel 'Swansea's Natural Environment' – 26 March 2018

Briefing – the Council's response to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Purpose: The report presents some background and contextual information to the Scrutiny Inquiry on 'Swansea's Natural Environment' to illustrate how the Council has responded so far to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and how it intends to develop this response.

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For Information

1.0 Background

1.1 This briefing provides some background information to help inform the Scrutiny Inquiry into 'Swansea's Natural Environment'. It provides contextual information on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the 'Act') and the Council's response and plans to implement the Act more generally.

1.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

1.3 The Act is intended to make public bodies think more about the long term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

1.4 The Act established a statutory Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, whose role is to act as a "guardian for the interests of future

generations in Wales”, and to support the public bodies listed in the Act to work towards achieving the seven national well-being goals.

1.5 The Auditor General for Wales may carry out an examination of public bodies to determine the extent to which they have acted in accordance with the duties set out for them by the Act.

1.6 The Act also establishes Public Services Boards (PSBs) for each local authority area in Wales. Each PSB must improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of its area by working to achieve the well-being goals.

2.0 Requirements on Public Bodies

2.1 In summary, the Act sets out a ‘Well-Being Duty’. The Well-Being Duty requires public bodies to carry out sustainable development and encompasses two main obligations:

- a. Deciding priorities – the duty to set ‘Well-Being Objectives’.
- b. Meeting priorities – the duty to take ‘reasonable steps’.

2.2 Public bodies must set and publish ‘*Well-Being Objectives*’.

2.3 When setting Well-Being Objectives, public bodies must have regard to all seven of the national *Well-Being Goals* prescribed under the Act.

2.4 The national Goals are not to be considered a hierarchy (i.e. they are all of equal importance), but as an integrated set.

2.5 Well-Being Objectives must be designed to ‘maximise’ a public bodies contribution’ to achieving each of the seven national Well-Being Goals.

2.6 Public bodies must take ‘all reasonable steps’ (in exercising their functions) to meet them.

2.7 The Act introduces a ‘*Sustainable Development Principle*’, which tells organisations how to go about meeting their duty under the Act.

2.8 The Sustainable Development Principle is based upon five key ways of working that public bodies must adopt. It expects public bodies to:

- 1 *Long-term*: look to the long term as well as focusing on now;
- 2 *Prevention*: take action to try and stop problems getting worse - or even stop them happening in the first place.
- 3 *Collaboration*: work together with other public bodies;
- 4 *Integration*: work together better;
- 5 *Involvement*: involve people reflecting the diversity of our communities.

- 2.9 Public bodies are required to publish a *Well-Being Statement* along with their Well-Being Objectives.
- 2.10 The Well-Being Statement must outline why public bodies feel that each Well-Being Objective will see it maximise its contribution to the seven national Well-Being Goals.
- 2.11 Public bodies must publish an *Annual Report* each year showing the progress it has made in meeting its Well-Being Objectives.

3.0 Progress to date

3.1 Well-being Objectives

- 3.1.1 Swansea Council has made good progress implementing the Act. The Act legislates for things that in many cases we are already doing. The Act should help create further momentum and put important issues, such as climate change, onto the agenda.
- 3.1.2 The Council published its Well-being Objectives for 2017/22 in August 2017 in the Corporate Plan. The Council's Well-being Objectives are:
- Safeguarding People from Harm.
 - Improving Education & Skills.
 - Transforming our Economy & Infrastructure.
 - Tackling Poverty.
 - Transformation & Future Council development.
- 3.1.3 The development of the Council's Well-being Objectives involved an assessment of how the Council could maximise its contribution to the national goals and a review of evidence to support this. The Council involved the staff, Members and the public in this review through surveys and through face-to-face consultation events.
- 3.1.4 The outcome has been a set of Well-being Objectives that have a broader focus than in previous years, are cross-cutting and integrated with each other and are better at showing the Council's contribution to national goals and to the economic, cultural, environmental and social well-being of Swansea and Wales.
- 3.1.5 Although there is no specific Well-being Objective associated with nature, the Council's Well-being Objectives are an integrated set that address **all** aspects of well-being. The following steps to deliver the Well-being Objectives and set out within the Corporate Plan illustrates the Council's contribution to environmental well-being:
- Teach young citizens to respect rights, understand responsibilities and be globally aware and responsible citizens by continuing to support schools to become *Eco Schools* increasing understanding, respect and appreciation of our environment.

- Use our school building and maintenance programme to reduce our carbon footprint.
- Promote and enhance a diverse and sustainable rural economy.
- Promote the Green Economy, including renewable energy (such as SCEES, Tidal Lagoon) providing energy security, climate change mitigation and economic and employment benefits.
- Work with others to provide sustainable and low carbon transport and infrastructure providing improved and cheaper connectivity and mobility and associated economic benefits at reduced environmental cost and improved air quality.
- Promote biodiversity and protect Swansea's green spaces, including parks for recreation and play, to promote health and well-being.
- Manage Swansea's coastline, promote improved bathing water quality and maintain Blue Flag status at Swansea's beaches to encourage tourism, protect the environment and support well-being.
- Give priority to providing an affordable housing solution in rural areas.
- Support recycling and ensure we continue to be the leading urban authority in Wales for reusing waste.
- Invest to improve housing and build more energy efficient Council homes and affordable housing to help meet housing need, reduce fuel bills, regenerate estates and bring wider economic and employment benefits.
- Explore creating our own energy venture to provide low-cost energy to homes helping to tackle high domestic fuel bills and fuel poverty.
- Support tackling climate change and help eradicate fuel poverty and boost economic development through the ARBED scheme and energy efficiency measures in social housing.
- Provide free or low cost environmental events, including guided walks and cycle rides; a wide range of talks, workshops and training courses about wildlife and environmental issues and children's events promoting environmental literacy and improving health and wellbeing.
- Encourage greater community ownership of parks and work with 'friends of parks' organisations to ensure the long-term sustainability and control of parks and public spaces.

3.1.6 The Council acknowledges that more still needs to be done in the development of Well-being Objectives, particularly around involving and working with others, as we develop our understanding and build upon existing practice and learn from other public bodies.

3.2 *Embedding the Sustainable Development principle*

3.2.1 There have been a number of areas of work underway to embed the sustainable development principle into how the Council works.

3.2.2 *Sustainable Swansea*

The sustainable development principle is integral to our *Sustainable Swansea – Fit for the Future* programme to transform the Council and make it more sustainable to meet present and future challenges.

3.2.3 *Cabinet Member for Future Generations*

This cross-cutting Cabinet position seeks to lead on embedding the sustainable development principle into the Council's policy and practice. In addition, elected Members were offered training on the Act as part of their induction.

3.2.4 *Foresighting*

A series of foresighting workshops were held with different groups within the Council, including Corporate Management Team, Leadership Team and Cabinet. This has helped build understanding of future challenges to support the Welsh Government's Future Trends Report.

3.2.5 *Risk Management*

The Council's risk management policy and framework were revised to incorporate the Sustainable Development Principle and to help identify and respond to longer-term strategic risks.

3.2.6 *Prevention Strategy*

The Council needs to continue to develop its preventative approach and has developed a *Prevention Strategy*. This strategy will further embed early intervention and prevention into the Council's business and place an even greater focus on improving well-being.

3.2.7 *Working with others*

We are collaborating with others on a number of our key priorities. For example, the Swansea Bay City Deal involves working with three other local authorities, the Welsh Government, Universities and the private sector to transform the economic landscape of the area, boost the local economy by £1.8 billion, and generate almost 10,000 new jobs over the next 15 years. This partnership approach is likely to continue to develop as the reform of local government requires local Authorities to work increasingly on a regional basis.

3.2.8 *Involving people*

The Council already has established arrangements for consulting with and involving citizens. For example, Schools pupils are involved in their education through School Councils and through Pupil Voice, which is aimed directly at increasing pupil participation as set out in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); Swansea was the first UK Council to adopt and embed UNCRC.

3.2.9 *Strategic Delivery Unit*

The Council has brought together strategic capability and capacity from across the Council, including staff from the former Sustainable Development Unit, into a single strategic policy and delivery unit. This will provide the required joined-up capability and capacity in strategic planning, policy, research and analysis in order to help the Council fulfil its obligations under the Act and embed the Act in everyone's everyday work.

4.0 Continuing work to embed the Sustainable Development Principle

4.1 The Council will continue with the work set out above in para 3. In addition, the following plans will continue to help embed the Sustainable Development Principle into the work of the Council.

4.1.2 *Organizational and workforce development*

The Council will support and train its workforce through an Organisational Development Strategy and Implementation Plan to deliver transformed services that are fit for the future so that we have the right people with the right skills, with the appropriate development pathway and rewards, and that we work in ways that provide the most sustainable outcomes for residents.

4.1.3 *Involvement and co-production*

The Council will provide the opportunity for local citizens to influence how policies are written and services are developed through the development of a Co-production Strategy. The Council will also seek to involve citizens by:

- working with others to build capacity and promote community action to involve and enable communities to run services and manage assets;
- working to ensure there is more targeted and effective engagement with the third sector to achieve both the Council's and shared priorities and outcomes;
- encouraging greater community ownership of parks and work with 'friends of parks' organizations to ensure the long-term sustainability and control of parks and public spaces;

- continuing to modernize public engagement in Council decision making through accessible meeting times, web broadcasting, electronic voting and e-petitions;
- making community budgets available so that Members can address local priorities.

4.1.4 *Service Planning*

Service Planning has been revised to help embed the Act, enabling services to show how they are embedding the Sustainable Development Principle and better show their contribution to the Council's Well-being Objectives.

4.1.5 *Cross-cutting Commissioning Reviews*

The Council's cross cutting *Commissioning Reviews* of services based on themes are aimed at making services more joined-up and sustainable providing better outcomes for citizens.

5.0 What the Council is doing differently

5.1 The following are some examples where the Council is already working differently.

5.1.2 *Long-term*

The Council has a number of strategic schemes, which help mitigate or adapt to future trends including:

- a 30% carbon reduction target over a 10 year period from 2011 as part of our overall Energy Strategy and Asset Management Plans;
- working in partnership with local organisations to improving energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions (Welsh Quality Housing Standard, ARBED);
- the development of the Local Flood Risk Management Plan;
- improving facilities in the city centre for sustainable modes of transport;
- developing a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Swansea;
- reducing waste through the 'Keep it to three' campaign;
- the Swansea Community Energy and Enterprise Scheme (SCEES) explores how local people in some of Swansea's most economically deprived areas can benefit from community renewable energy projects.

5.1.3 *Prevention*

The Council's *Safe Looked After Children Reduction Strategy* is framed by efforts to ensure a more preventative approach. It aims at safely

reducing demand for children's services and ensuring that other alternatives to statutory Child & Family Services are explored.

5.1.4 *Integration*

The Council's work with our Western Bay partners is enabling the integration of health and social care. Local Government Reorganisation will develop this further where integration and collaboration underpin all aspects of the Council's Corporate Plan.

5.1.5 *Collaboration*

The Council is taking steps to improve, expand and diversify leisure, cultural and heritage facilities and infrastructure to bring economic, environmental and cultural benefits. The Council is working in partnership with Swansea University to breathe life back into the site of the former Hafod-Morfa Copperworks through the Cu@Swansea project. The project includes a programme of physical works to reclaim the site from dereliction and enable people to visit and reconnect with the site, including schools, the public and community groups and a strong friends group has emerged.

5.1.6 *Involvement*

The Council is committed to involving young people in their education. The Council was the first in the UK to adopt and fully embed the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* that sets out rights for all children and enables them to participate in society in an equitable way.

5.1.7 The formation of 'Friends' groups are being supported to regenerate local parks, beaches and allotments. Examples of success include *Parc Llewellyn*, where a Green Flag Award resulted from the work of the Friends Group.

5.1.8 The *Fforestfach Day Service* is doing great things to support adults with learning disabilities to benefit from jobs and work experience that makes a difference to them and to local communities and the environment. The ideas come from local communities themselves and a real benefit is had in people seeing people with learning disabilities improving their areas and challenging perceptions and stereotypes.

5.1.9 The service deserves great credit for seven brilliant projects ranging from the well-known Neighbourhood Environmental Action Team (NEAT) teams to catering services at the Victoria Park Kiosk, the Fforestfach fruit and vegetable nursery and the Grounds Maintenance Team, which supports management of wildlife and environmental habitats.

6.0 Barriers to implementing the Act

6.1 Some barriers exist to implementing the Act and embedding the Sustainable Development principle:

- Established working practices that may not reflect the Sustainable Development principle.
- Professional boundaries, culture and practices that may not reflect the Sustainable Development principle.
- Lack of awareness, understanding and consistency that may inhibit cross-service and integrated working.
- Reduced resources and capacity to help facilitate working in line with the Sustainable Development principle.
- Five-year political cycle with a risk that there is some focus on short-term and politically expedient priorities above longer-term needs.
- Annual budgeting cycle and an over-reliance on grants from Welsh Government in place of adequate core funding undermining sustainability.
- Differences in understanding when working with others and what that means for different organisations creating barriers to joint working and pooling budgets.
- A need for a more consistent and joined-up approach across government so that more regard is given by central government to integration and / or local governments' capacity to deliver new legislative requirements.
- Disproportionate inspection and regulation and a regulatory regime that is based upon 'naming and shaming' leading to 'blaming and gaming'. This regulatory culture undermines the idea of trial and error and iterative success.
- Bureaucracy – too much focus in the Act on setting priorities, writing plans and undertaking assessments at the expense of making the change. More focus should be on the outcomes (behavioural and cultural change – the 5 ways of working) and less on the process (setting objectives, making assessments, reporting, etc.).

7.0 Support that would be beneficial to implementing the Act

7.1 The following external support would help the Council and public bodies further embed the Sustainable Development principle

- Welsh government and regulators continuing to change the way that they work in line with the Sustainable Development principle so that we can change the way that we work. For example, moving towards a

regulatory regime and action planning that promotes iterative learning and takes account of ongoing learning.

- A Welsh Government funded Improvement agency to share learning and best practice.
- Less central guidance and prescription on embedding the Sustainable Development principle. Local Government should be judged on the outcomes it delivers.
- Improved funding for local government to improve capacity and capability to deliver.
- More certainty over medium-term funding for local government to allow for longer-term planning.
- More funding included in local government core funding as opposed to being distributed through grants.
- A more proportionate and risk based (light touch) audit and inspection regime that is more focussed on outcomes for citizens and less concerned with process.
- Accountability properly balanced with the need to learn lessons and make improvements – so that ‘failure’ is not always seen as a bad thing but as a necessary means of learning lessons and making improvements.
- More integrated working and collaboration between WAO and the other regulators and inspectors to account for local authorities adopting new models of delivery, including more collaboration and partnership working.
- Welsh government to work with professional bodies and training providers (including Universities) on building the sustainability principle into professional practice and training.
- Listening more to local government about what is working and what is not working in relation to the Act, guidance and regulation and then making changes in response to the feedback.

8.0 Equality and Engagement Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct equality and engagement implications to this briefing note. However, it is important to note that our legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) continue to apply alongside the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

9.0 Legal Implications

9.1 There are no legal implications.

10.0 Financial Implications

10.1 There are no direct and immediate financial implications arising from this report. However as noted in the report itself there are potential financial barriers and potential implications arising from the well-being duty, the absence of long term financial certainty over the majority of our finances which are without the Council's control (predominantly block and specific grants) and the continued foreseeable constrained levels of overall resources. This may practically impact the Council's ability (simply due to constrained, or uncertain, short to medium term finances) to look "beyond" to the future generations.

For Information

Background papers: *none*

Appendices: none