



To/

**Professor Andrew Davies
Chair of Swansea Public Services
Board**

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Overview & Scrutiny

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29th November 2018

BY EMAIL

Summary: This letter is from the Public Services Board Performance Panel. It follows on from the meeting with the Future Generations Commissioner on 3rd October 2018.

Dear Professor Davies,

On 3rd October 2018 the Panel met with the Sophie Howe the Future Generations Commissioner to discuss her thoughts on Public Services Boards and the progress so far. The Panel is grateful to the Commissioner for taking time to attend this meeting considering her busy schedule and for giving us the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the Panels thoughts.

We heard that we are two and a half years into the Well-being and Future Generations Act implementation and that so far the work in Wales has been ground-breaking, exciting and challenging. The duties under the act are about changing behaviour and fundamentally changing how we, along with other public bodies, do things.

We heard that not all Public Services Boards (PSBs) are working as well as they could be but there are pockets of good practice. We heard that the best PSBs are those with inclusive members and members are more engaged when they are involved in setting the agenda.

Both the Panel and the Commissioner agree that an opportunity was missed to regionalise the work and there needs to be consideration over whether there is an appetite to do this.

We heard how some issues are too wide ranging to be dealt with by a single public body such as health, poverty and the environment and we all need to work together to achieve progress. The Panel was interested to hear that the Future Generations Commissioner is developing a number of future generations' frameworks which will act as prompts for what should be considered when developing projects. This should

act as a way of creating consistency and adherence to the Act ensuring important aspects are not missed and consideration is given to the Act requirements at the earliest opportunity.

We heard that housing and education are not core considerations of the Act but the Commissioner is working with schools and housing associations to ensure that they get the attention and profile which is needed. For example, housing should be using new technology which is energy generating, using local businesses within green infrastructure and looking at zero fuel poverty initiatives.

The Panel made the observation that the legislation is about process and raises expectation without supplying necessary resources and questioned how we fund the demand and who has the power to influence action plans if they go awry. The Commissioner made the point that judicial review will be the action to take if the requirements under the act are not met. The Panel suggested that most people cannot afford judicial review and once the issues have been reviewed, Local Authorities should be issued with guidance of the outcome to review and implement.

The issue of planning was raised. The Panel felt that the resilience goal was being misinterpreted by the Planning Inspectorate and other associated bodies. This misinterpretation relates to the word 'resilience' being used to mean social or community resilience rather than ecological resilience which is what was intended. The Commissioner agreed this was an issue and is making this a top priority trying to get policy and guidance in line with the Future Generations Act.

The Panel asked whether a lack of funding for the work of Public Services Boards is having a negative impact on their performance. The Commissioner agreed that the initial cost estimation was very mechanical, it focussed on processes not outcomes and there was no resourcing for cultural change. Social care, decarbonisation, skills and mental health were all areas which the Commissioner highlighted as areas of poor funding. The Panel heard how the Commissioner was providing budget feedback but the Panel feel a lack of funding will be an ongoing issue in the efforts of PSBs to deliver under the legislation.

The Panel will continue to meet quarterly to speak with those involved in delivery and planning of the PSB action plans in Swansea and feedback any relevant information to you.

There is no requirement for you to respond to this letter but your thoughts and comments are welcome.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Mary Jones

Convener, Public Services Board Scrutiny Performance Panel

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