



Report for the Director of Place

Equalities and Future Generations Policy Development Committee
17 December 2019

Sustainable Development Policy

Purpose:	To update and refresh the sustainable development policy in line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015
Policy Framework:	Sustainable Development Policy
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) A working group oversees the development of a draft sustainable development Policy. This should include all aspects of sustainable development such as climate change, biodiversity etc. as discussed with the Director of Place. 2) A corporate and political sponsor oversees this work. 3) The policy is linked to the sustainable development action plan reporting to CMT.
Report Author:	Suzy Richards
Finance Officer:	Paul Roach
Legal Officer:	Sally Ann Evans
Equalities:	Rhian Millar

1. Background

- 1.1 Swansea Council first adopted a corporate Sustainable Development Policy in 2006. This was last reviewed and adopted at Council in January 2012.
- 1.2 The Sustainable Development Policy is the Council's principal vehicle for mainstreaming sustainable development throughout the authority.
- 1.3 This review links into wider work on policy development around climate change, decarbonisation and biodiversity.
- 1.4 Previous Policies aimed to set out the Council's objectives regarding sustainability and provided governance for delivery via the Sustainable Development Framework Action Plan

- 1.5 While previous policies predate the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (which placed a statutory duty on local authority to deliver sustainable development) there is clear continuity as Swansea's definition of sustainable development (Bruntland 1987) is the same as that underpinning the Act's sustainable development principle.

'to act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

- 1.6 The challenge for 2020 is to further embed sustainable development into all levels of decision making at the earliest possible stage. Cultural and behavioural change across services and at all levels of the organisation is key. A refreshed sustainable development policy provides a local policy context and structure necessary to improve the ways we work as an organisation for both current and future generations.

2. Rationale for a Sustainable Development Policy

The following drivers suggest that an updated Sustainable Development Policy is required:

- 2.1 The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 places a duty on the Council to carry out sustainable development. The policy needs updating to reflect and embed the cultural change required by this Act. The sustainable development principle's 'Five Ways of Working' are applied in ways that lead Wales in some services but are less well applied in others. A consistent rather than ad hoc approach is needed to ensure outcomes maximise social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being.
- 2.2 Welsh Government Guidance on 'Making Good Decisions' suggests that decisions are potentially vulnerable to legal challenge and judicial review where consideration of the Act cannot be demonstrated throughout the decision making process. An updated policy would help address any corporate gaps or vulnerabilities.
- 2.3 The Future Generations Commissioner provides advice for public bodies and is placing increasing emphasis on demonstrating how sustainable development is taken into account from the earliest stage of decision making throughout organisations.
- 2.4 The Local Government Measure 2009 in its supporting guidance states that local authorities will need to set improvement objectives especially in terms of social, environmental and economic well-being that contribute to the achievement of sustainable development of an area. Sustainability is identified as one of the issues that local authorities need to improve on in the delivery of its functions. This measure is still in force and is assessed by Wales Audit Office as part of our Annual Review of Performance.

3. Opportunities and benefits

- 3.1 The Corporate (Well-being) Plan and its priorities (well-being objectives) are expressed in terms of the sustainable development principle's ways of working and how they maximise contribution to the well-being goals. In addition, increasingly funding bids and external reporting are framed using the sustainable development principle. Impact Assessments and decision making tools also need to use the same criteria to improve decision making.
- 3.2 This means there are opportunities to reduce duplication by using a common vocabulary in order to collate information once then build on and use it to meet multiple purposes.
- 3.3 Sustainable development underpins our corporate plan so it makes sense for this framework to help organise policies strategies and plans align in a logical way.
- 3.4 The Well-being goals provide a means to connect and integrate our policies and ensure a joined up approach.
- 3.5 Climate change and decarbonisation explicitly underpin three of the seven goals. This provides a means of ensuring action is embedded in all services.
- 3.6 There are some gaps in staff knowledge and understanding of sustainable development that may prevent multiple outcomes being identified and achieved. A refreshed sustainable policy would provide clarity and an opportunity to renew focus.
- 3.7 The policy provides a way to embed using sustainable development as a tool to balance social, economic, environmental and cultural considerations taking account of the short and long term impacts. Sustainable development as a lens to balance decision making is a useful way to communicate the complexity of decision making and demonstrate accountability.

4. The 2012 Sustainable Development Policy

This policy sets out

- a vision for Swansea's future well-being
- a definition of sustainable development
- The corporate approach to be adopted
- Principles to achieve its aims
- Identification of priority areas for change from decarbonisation to governance (and key services impacted)
- Delivery mechanism, governance and monitoring
- Links to
- Five Year Implementation Plan

5. Options for consideration in 2020

5.1 A refreshed plan could reference

- A vision of the Swansea we want
- A summary of Swansea's long leadership in sustainable development
- A summary of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and definition of sustainable development
- The Sustainable Development principle's Five Ways of Working
- The National Well-being Goals
- Alignment with the Public Services Board's Local Well-being Plan and partnership working

5.2 It might also link to the sustainable development action plan which reports to CMT. This includes

- **The Corporate Areas for Change**

While individual officers and services understand and apply the sustainable development principle to their specific areas of specialism, there is often less awareness and gaps in understanding where cross functional or corporate working takes place. In particular there is scope to improve how the wider organisation interacts with the seven areas for corporate change set out in statutory guidance. These are

- Financial planning.
- Asset management.
- Performance management.
- Risk management.
- Corporate Planning.
- Workforce Planning.
- Procurement.

- **The Five ways of working – corporate perspective**

- Integration
- Involvement
- Long term
- Prevention
- Collaboration

5.3 A priority led approach

The previous policy co-ordinated work on the following priorities

- Natural Environment
- Sustainable use of Natural Resources
- Climate Change/Decarbonisation
- Social Inclusion
- Economic Resilience

- Governance
- Procurements

6. Equality and Engagement Implications

6.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

6.2 There are no equality implications in relation to this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications other than those already mentioned in the report.

Background Papers: None

Appendices: None