



## Report of the Director of Place

Equalities and Future Generations Policy Development Committee  
29 September 2020

### Sustainable Development Policy

<b>Purpose:</b>	To refresh the Sustainable Development Policy in line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Sustainable Development Policy
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	It is recommended that:  1) The draft sustainable development Policy is approved for further consideration by Council. 2) The policy is linked to a sustainable development action plan reporting to CMT.
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#### 1. Background

- 1.1 Swansea Council's corporate Sustainable Development Policy was last reviewed and adopted at Council in January 2012.
- 1.2 Previous policies predate the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (which placed a statutory duty on local authority to deliver sustainable development). However Swansea Council'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.'*

- 1.3 The Sustainable Development Policy is the Council's principal vehicle for mainstreaming sustainable development throughout the authority. It is needed to help explain what sustainable development means in Swansea and as a focus for co-ordinating cross cutting actions.
- 1.4 Sustainable development underpins our Corporate Plan so is a streamlined way to permanently embed emerging issues, new legislation and regulations into the way the Council does business.
- 1.5 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. This Policy helps to meet recommendations in the Statutory Future Generations Report 2020.
- 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 a renewed focus for training.
- 3.7 Sustainable development as a lens to balance decision making is a useful way to communicate the complexity of decision making and demonstrate accountability. 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.

### **4. The 2020 Sustainable Development Policy**

This draft policy in Appendix A sets out

- a vision for Swansea's future well-being
- a definition of sustainable development
- What the five ways of working mean for Services
- What the Well-being Goals mean for Services
- The Council's Well-being Objectives
- Where the change is needed- 7 Corporate Areas

- Delivery mechanism, governance and accountability

## **5. Implications**

### **5.1 Financial**

There are no financial implications associated with this report

### **5.2 Legal**

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

### **5.3 Equalities**

There are no additional Equalities implications associated with this Report

## **Appendix A: Draft Sustainable Development Policy**