



**To/
Councillor Andrea Lewis,
Chair of Swansea Public Services
Board**

BY EMAIL

cc: Vice-Chair of Swansea PSB

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Scrutiny

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SPC/2022-23/3

29 November 2022

Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Chair of Swansea Public Services Board following the meeting of the Committee on 18 October 2022. It is about the performance of the Public Services Board. A formal written response is not required.

Dear Councillor Lewis,

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 18 October

We are writing to you following our Scrutiny session on the Public Services Board (PSB) with our views, reflecting on information presented, questions, and discussion.

As part of our ongoing scrutiny, the Committee considered the PSB Annual Report 2021/22 in relation to overall progress and performance of the PSB. We thank you for also providing information on work being done to improve the PSB's performance framework (following issue raised by the Committee); the new Assessment of Local Well-being (published in May 2022), and the development of a new Local Well-being Plan which we understand must be in place by May 2023.

We thank you for attending the meeting, and appreciated the input provided by the PSB Vice-Chair, Roger Thomas, Leader of the Council, Councillor Rob Stewart, Richard Rowlands, Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager, Swansea Council, and the various partner representatives (PSB strategic / operational leads) who were able to contribute giving the Committee a more rounded view of the PSB and its effectiveness.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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This was further evidence to the Committee on how the PSB is performing and making a difference for citizens, and follows on from the January 2022 PSB Scrutiny session, at which we considered the previous annual report and took the opportunity to focus on the delivery of the 'Early Years' and 'Live Well, Age Well' PSB well-being objectives with relevant leads.

We also took the opportunity to follow up on previous issues raised by the Committee, communicated to you within previous letters.

Scrutiny Views

From our discussion, the Committee would highlight the following issues in terms of providing 'critical-friend' challenge to the PSB for improvement:

1) Performance Framework

The Committee over recent PSB sessions has called for the PSB to improve the way it measures its performance. Given that PSBs have been in operation since 2016, you acknowledged that this has taken time to develop. However, we welcomed the efforts you reported being made to improve this, to facilitate Scrutiny, but also noted the challenges you outlined around this. Nevertheless, the Committee looks forward to seeing more progress in developing the performance framework, as the PSB develops its new Well-being Plan, which will make it easier for Scrutiny to monitor PSB activity and performance against indicators, stated actions, expected outputs / outcomes, and its effectiveness.

We noted that the pandemic has hindered progress in the last few years, as well as the ongoing funding and resource challenges that PSBs (and individual partners) face that impact ability to focus on the work necessary in the development, collection, processing, and reporting of data. As such, it is important that the PSB focuses on what it can deliver, and less about aspirations, to be able to see results from partnership activity and the investment of time and resources. We accept that quantitative data (KPIs) alone will not be sufficient, and in many cases reporting on outcomes will require qualitative information.

2) PSB Annual Report

The Committee suggested that future Annual Reports would benefit from highlighting more about the work that PSB partners are doing together. We appreciate that individual PSB statutory members are leading on the delivery of specific well-being objectives / work streams, and that is of course important to report on, but giving prominence to demonstrating the partnership / collaborative working to tackle issues, with examples of successes, would be more satisfying when assessing the difference that the PSB is making and added value.

You took the opportunity to talk about some of those things, such as work on developing Green Infrastructure, dealing with the impact of Wildfires, and partner commitments to Carbon Reduction. Contributions during the session from other PSB members painted a positive picture of effective networking and strong links / connections that have developed between partners, with the PSB helping to bring organisations together. For example, enabling Swansea Council for Voluntary Service to get more involved in supporting partner activities, such as work on Swansea as a Human Rights City, as well as develop closer connections with Swansea Council, the Local Health Board, and Fire & Rescue Service, and others.

The Committee also asked about the reference to National Well-being Indicators within the Annual Report. Of the 50 or so national indicators, it was unclear why the Annual Report included the specific ones highlighted in the section on 'Swansea's Local Well-being' (this included performance in relation to community safety and air quality), and how they relate to PSB objectives. It would help if national well-being indicators could more explicitly linked to PSB priorities / well-being objectives that are reported on, so the relevance and value of these is clearer.

3) Development of the new Well-Being Plan and Public Engagement

We heard that the PSB's new Well-being Plan must be published by May 2023. The Committee will need to be consulted in the development of the Plan to give views on any draft Plan. Please ensure that this is factored into the PSBs decision-making timetable so that there is sufficient time for meaningful scrutiny.

As well as Committee input, the PSB will also need to engage the public. Whilst public consultation is never easy when it comes to strategic documents, the PSB should consider how opportunities to engage can be more accessible with methods will maximise reach, learning and building upon previous experience with the development of the Assessment of Local Well-being over the last year. We suggested looking at how social media can be best utilised and piggybacking off existing community events to talk to people about the Plan. The volume of information to review can be off putting, even for those most keen to input views, so would encourage you to consider producing 'executive summaries' and / or easy read documents to facilitate public feedback.

Your Response

We hope that you find the contents of this letter useful and would welcome any comments, however we do not expect you to provide a formal response. However, we do expect the PSB to consider our views. Please report our letter to the PSB Joint Committee. The Committee will follow up on progress in addressing these issues at our next PSB Scrutiny session.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Black', written in a cursive style.

COUNCILLOR PETER BLACK
Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee
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