



**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/2023-24/17

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Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Chair of Swansea Public Services Board following the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 14 May 2024. It contains feedback on the performance of the Public Services Board. A formal written response is not required.

Dear Councillor Lewis,

Scrutiny of Swansea Public Services Board – 14 May

We are writing to you following our Scrutiny session with our views, reflecting on information presented, questions and discussion, on the performance of Swansea Public Services Board (PSB), and difference that it is making. This follows on from the previous Scrutiny session held in October 2023, as part of ongoing Scrutiny of Swansea PSB.

Back in October we had followed up on the development of the Well-being Plan, and asked about the associated action plan to deliver objectives and how performance against the Plan will be measured. The Committee saw the action plan for 2023/24 which contained actions for each of the 8 Well-being Steps, intended outcomes, milestones, and success measures, with named strategic and operational leads from across the partnership, not just the Council, showing progress / status at Quarter 2.

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We thank you and the Vice-Chair for attending the meeting in May, and appreciated the input provided by Ness Young (Director of Corporate Services, Swansea Council) and Richard Rowlands (Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager, Swansea Council) along with other participants, to help the Committee understand progress and developments. You provided the Committee with the PSB Annual Report, which reports on progress the PSB has made during 2023/24 to deliver the Well-being Plan, and the Wellbeing Plan Action Plan, which outlines steps to deliver the PSB Well-being Objectives during 2024/25.

Scrutiny Views

Annual Report

You told the Committee that, with the support of officers, there has been a step change in the way the PSB is focussed, demonstrated by the Annual Report, and the Well-being Steps and Action Plan for 2024-25. Reflecting on previous Scrutiny sessions, over recent years, we agreed that things appear to be progressing in a much more positive way, heading in the right direction.

You highlighted achievements against each of the Wellbeing Objectives: Early Years; Live Well, Age Well; Climate Change & Nature Recovery; and Strong Communities, including steps to deliver these. The improvements to the PSB's governance and focus on performance management arrangements were also recognised. We noted the next steps for the PSB involved actions to: support the transformation of Early Year Services; build on Swansea's 2022 declaration of being a Human Rights City; work towards Swansea's Net Zero target and nature recovery; make Swansea safer, more cohesive and prosperous; develop Swansea's integrated Cultural Offer; influence and connect with other governance arrangements; and improve data quality and accessibility and further develop Swansea PSB performance management arrangements.

You felt that there was a strong commitment to working together, amongst the Partnership. There was an admission that in the early years the PSB may have lacked focus and suffered from over ambition, and it has taken time to improve the way the PSB works and build relationships. We were told that there have been activities (including various community events) that would not have happened without the PSB being in place, which is good to hear.

We noted that a video version of the Annual Report was also under development, to engage the public, and will accompany the final version of the Annual Report.

We suggested that you keep the way the Annual Report is written under review so that each year you consider how it can be better at showing the performance of the PSB and outcomes against the Plan, balancing the need for something useful for the public and something that satisfies Councillors and those responsible for Scrutiny, so that it is easier to assess success.

The Committee was also interested in examples of the PSB's engagement with the public, and would welcome a focussed discussion at the next Scrutiny session in November on this aspect, looking at relevant activities during 2024.

Well-being Plan Action Plan

The Committee asked about your satisfaction with the PSB Action Plan. You stated that the PSB Action Plan had effective measures of performance across all of the 8 Well-being Plan Steps and was monitored every quarter at PSB meetings; each having a clear set of actions, desired outcome, milestones and success measures.

- Step 1:** To support the transformation of Early Year Services in Swansea to provide better support for children to have the best start in life
- Step 2:** To build on Swansea's 2022 declaration of being a Human Rights City
- Step 3:** Working towards Swansea's net zero target and nature recovery
- Step 4:** Making Swansea safer, more cohesive, and prosperous
- Step 5:** Developing Swansea's Integrated Cultural Offer
- Step 6:** To Influence and connect with other governance arrangements across the Swansea Bay region
- Step 7:** To improve data quality and accessibility across the Swansea Bay region
- Step 8:** To develop Swansea PSB performance management arrangements which measure and monitor the PSB's progress

You were asked about the most challenging issue(s) for the PSB in terms of delivery of the Well-being Plan / Objectives. You stated that Early Years and Climate Change & Nature Recovery remain the most complex, multi-faceted issues, requiring a significant undertaking from partners. These were about generational changes that will take time, nevertheless steps were being taken to make progress on these. Managing the differing priorities and budgetary pressures within each of the partner organisations also remained a challenge, recognising that the PSB itself did not have any additional resources.

We look forward to hearing more about achievements and outcomes to evidence the difference that the PSB is making for Swansea.

Comparison with Elsewhere

We were interested in your awareness and insight about how well Swansea PSB is performing in comparison with other PSBs in the region / across Wales.

We were told that direct comparisons against the other PSB's within Wales had not taken place, so it was difficult to say that Swansea PSB was better than others, however any information about good practice elsewhere and common themes were utilised. You mentioned that there are shared learning events supported by the Welsh Government and Future Generations Commissioner.

We noted that some of the PSB partners sat on multiple PSBs across Wales because of different regional boundaries, and therefore have an awareness of the operation of PSBs elsewhere and share that experience and insight for Swansea PSB to learn from. The PSB Vice-Chair stated that in his experience there are some differences between how PSBs are operating, which is perhaps to be expected, and felt that Swansea PSB was achieving something tangible.

Whilst there have been some mergers between PSBs, Swansea PSB has instead identified areas of collaborative working on areas of common interest, such as County Lines, and Suicide Intervention. You also told the Committee that Swansea PSB had good links with the Neath Port Talbot PSB – there has been specific work around Substance Misuse, recognising the benefit of tackling this as a regional issue.

We were referred to findings from a [2019 Audit Wales report](#) which reviewed PSBs across Wales. Whilst a lack of funding was identified as a barrier to progress, you stated that partner organisations were working together to set realistic and pragmatic targets. The involvement of citizens in the work of the PSB was one of the areas for development identified in the Audit report. However, in reality people are less interested in Strategy and just want to see a difference. We accepted that people may not necessarily engage with the entity that is the PSB but there are ways to engage people within each of the Well-being Plan Steps. **We need to demonstrate how the PSB affects people's day to day life. The Committee also encouraged you to develop better links with our most comparable PSB to look at differences and learning.**

Welsh Government Involvement

We discussed Welsh Government interest and support for PSBs. We noted that each PSB has a Welsh Government representative, who is invited to attend all PSB meetings and that the Welsh Government produces and circulates a quarterly bulletin on relevant information and policy. **The Committee requested that the Welsh Government quarterly bulletin, referred to, be distributed amongst Swansea Councillors as it will help to raise awareness of the PSB.**

We noted some concerns around the contribution of Welsh Government officials to the PSB process, as there has been a turnover of representatives affecting the development of relationships and consistency. The Committee was surprised that the Welsh Government was not more involved.

Your Response

We hope that you find the contents of this letter helpful and would welcome any comments, however we do not expect you to provide a formal response. However, we do expect the PSB to be aware of and consider our views. Please report our letter to the next available PSB meeting.

The Committee will follow up on progress / developments every six months. We have scheduled this for the Committee meetings on 19 November 2024 and 13 May 2025 which should facilitate half-year and full-year monitoring with better alignment with your PSB meetings. We look forward to seeing the Action Plan and progress against targets.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR PETER BLACK

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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