



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

Cllr Rob Stewart
Chair of Swansea Public Services
Board

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Summary: This is a letter from the Public Services Board Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Chair of the Public Services Board following the meeting of the Panel on 15 February. It reflects on the Panel's Q & A session with the Chair of the Public Services Board.

Dear Councillor Stewart,

This letter is to provide you and the Public Services Board (PSB) with feedback from the meeting of the Public Services Board Scrutiny Panel, which you attended on 15 February 2017.

Q & A session with the Chair of the PSB

Our meeting with you is part of a series of Q & A sessions we are arranging with all the PSB Core Group members in order to understand the contribution their organisations are making to the work of the PSB.

This letter reflects on the Q & A session with you, issues raised, and the views and recommendations of the Panel, including any matters we would like the PSB to consider.

In your opening remarks you referred to:

- The evolution of the Public Services Board from the Local Service Board, key differences including the statutory footing, and new challenges, particularly for some of the partners to engage with all the PSBs across Wales.

- The PSB organisational chart which showed the structure of the PSB, the participation of the various organisations involved, and links with scrutiny on a local level and national accountability.
- The relationship between the Core Group and Partnership Group, and the need to strike a balance between executive decision-making and wider engagement with partners.
- PSB priorities – you stated that there has been a cross-over with previous LSB priorities but these were in the process of being closed off. New priorities will be informed by the response to the Wellbeing Assessment.

We discussed the following issues:

The role of Councils in the leadership of PSBs compared with that of partners, and their commitment, involvement and engagement.

Although Council's have a statutory responsibility to provide leadership for PSBs, you stated that it was not possible for the Council to lead on everything, and that the success of the PSB depended on shared leadership, whether that is about partners taking a lead on certain aspects, or contributing in other ways. You clearly welcomed the involvement and support of partners. The contribution of finance and resources however was a key issue to be progressed.

We heard that there is a good level of partner attendance at meetings, and that a big difference between the former Local Service Board and the PSB was organisational representation at a far more senior level. You spoke positively about partner commitment to PSB priorities, such as Domestic Abuse. Examples were also noted of certain partners, such as the Fire Service, volunteering to lead specific work streams at sub-group level.

How pooled funding to tackle PSB priorities is being addressed and achieved.

You told us that to date administrative support for the PSB has become jointly funded, but discussions have been held about creating a pooled budget for the PSB. You explained that this was a difficult issue - although supported in principle, commitment on finance and resources was needed. However, you felt that progress was being made, and it was positive that partners have indicated a willingness to contribute to the funding for two new Local Area Coordinators. This was cited as a something of a test for the PSB, as the commitment to fund has been given but you are waiting to see whether that will be delivered. We noted that the evaluation report in respect of Local Area Coordination would be published soon, and this would provide evidence with regard to the expansion of this approach. You indicated that there was good evidence of success but clearly partners will need to see a sound business case before any agreement to collaborate on this. We look forward to seeing

the evaluation report. Please ensure that the report is provided to Panel Members as soon as it is published.

The variation / mismatch in the resources between partner organisations that may affect their contribution or ability to participate effectively and support work, and how that can be addressed.

We referred to issues raised by SCVS, one of the PSB's invited participants, at the Panel's Q & A session in January. The Panel heard about the pressure on their resources to assist the work of the PSB. In our meeting with Amanda Carr, Director SCVS, we discussed the uncertainty of funding faced by SCVS and other third sector organisations, which can impact on their ability to support the work of the PSB and to forward plan. Whilst it is within the remit of the Director to attend key strategic meetings, we were advised that SCVS is often not always able to provide or coordinate representation to sub, working and task and finish groups, given the relatively small number of people involved. We felt that the PSB would need to consider some way of funding to facilitate the involvement of the third sector in its work.

You reiterated that participation was encouraged but invited participants were not being asked to contribute financially to the PSB. You did however recognise that their involvement in assisting with and helping to deliver the work of the PSB could be a pressure. You stressed that invited participants could not be funded to participate however you accepted that where they may be asked to carry out specific work this should be resourced. We agreed that the achievement of a pooled budget for the PSB, one that the Council would also contribute to, would clearly help in being able to do this. You noted the issues raised and indicated a willingness to discuss with SCVS. You referred to the long-standing relationship between the Council and SCVS, noting that the SCVS is a recipient of Council funding to support the organisation generally.

Progress with the delivery of PSB priorities, and process of monitoring progress against targets and evaluating achievement / effectiveness, including how well specific actions for individual organisations are being completed.

We heard that partners are signed up to the priorities and there is buy-in. You felt that things were moving forward at a good pace, and organisations were mobilised to work on the priorities. You remarked that it remained a challenge to identify issues which had the potential to cut across all the organisations involved.

You referred to the driver diagrams that have been used in the past to show outcomes, measures of success, and actions necessary, which will continue to be drawn up for PSB priorities. You stated that specific actions will be clear from this which the Panel can follow. You added that the process of discussion across the partnership does take time including the agreement of priorities, actions and measures that the whole PSB is comfortable with and fully behind.

You conceded that there was much to do in terms of developing an effective performance management framework for the PSB. It is something which the Scrutiny Panel must see in order to carry out its role. It is essential that we can identify specific measurable actions for projects so that we can monitor progress and delivery against targets, and difference made. It would be helpful if this also shows the contribution of individual partners. As we see this framework emerging we will give constructive feedback to improve the quality of reports on plans and performance.

You encouraged the Panel to read PSB Partnership Group agendas in order to see more detail and keep abreast of progress with priorities and projects.

Public consultation on the draft Wellbeing Assessment, and efforts to ensure awareness amongst communities and understanding to ensure a good level of response.

We wanted to know what was being done to ensure the survey reached communities and how this matter was being communicated, as the Wellbeing Assessment may not be the easiest of reads. We look forward to hearing about the response to the Assessment and how public views have influenced the final report.

Possible future reorganisation of PSBs across Wales and reduction in number on a regional basis.

We talked about the possible reorganisation of PSBs across Wales, following a regional footprint. Exactly what footprint that would be was clearly a matter of debate. You felt that it may benefit those partners that currently support all PSBs across Wales and improve their capacity to engage more effectively. You told us that you would welcome changes however not at the cost of the priorities identified by Swansea.

The input of Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government Association.

You were satisfied with the input and support from the Welsh Government to the Swansea PSB, with regular attendance at relevant meetings. You also mentioned the input provided by a number of national Commissioners to advise and support local work.

With regard to the WLGA we noted that there was no direct input however it had a key role in advising local authorities on relevant matters such as the regional agenda and Welsh Government White Papers.

The experience of PSBs elsewhere and good practice.

We noted that practice across Wales differed slightly and that it was difficult to identify good practice with the experience to date.

Possible impact from the ending of Communities First funding.

Given the recent Welsh Government announcement about ending funding for the Communities First Programme we were concerned to know the impact this may have on projects in Swansea. We understood that there would be a phased approach to ending the Programme (70% funding for the coming year) and that a legacy fund would be established from April 2018 to help maintain effective interventions. We also learned that alternative pots of money are expected to become available in due course to support initiatives such as helping people into employment.

We felt that implications from the decisions by Welsh Government on the Communities First Programme needed to be discussed by the PSB to consider the effect on organisations, projects and initiatives across the partnership, and managing the transition. The sustainability of successful projects already delivered in Swansea was clearly a matter of concern.

The effectiveness of partnership working in relation to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Following on from our recent scrutiny inquiry we talked about the importance of CAMHS and the need for effective partnership working to tackle mental health. You acknowledged this as a big national issue but accepted the need to do more collectively locally to ensure sufficiency of care in the area. You pledged to do what you can in terms of the PSB and the Western Bay health and social care partnership to ensure focus on this issue.

Forthcoming Q & A Sessions with Core Group Members

We met with representatives of the ABMU Health Board, South Wales Police, and Natural Resources Wales on 15 March. I will write to you again sharing our views and observations following this meeting.

We have arranged to meet with representatives of the Mid & West Wales Fire & Rescue Service on 12 April. A session with the Welsh Government representative will need to take place early in the new municipal year.

Your Response

We hope that you find the contents of this letter useful and would welcome any further comments however **we do not expect you to provide a formal response.**

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Jones".

Councillor Mary Jones

Convener, Public Services Board Scrutiny Performance Panel

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