



**To/
Councillor Rob Stewart &
Councillor Andrea Lewis,
Joint Chairs of Swansea Public
Services Board
BY EMAIL**

cc: Vice-Chair of Swansea PSB

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Scrutiny

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SPC/2020-21/2

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Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Joint Chairs of Swansea Public Services Board following the meeting of the Committee on 15 December 2020. It is about the performance of the Public Services Board.

Dear Councillor,

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 15 December

We are writing to you following our scrutiny session on the Public Services Board (PSB) with our views

The Committee considered the PSB Annual Report 2019/20 and heard about the work, achievements, and performance of the PSB from Cllr. Andrea Lewis (newly-appointed Joint Chair of the PSB), Cllr. Clive Lloyd (former PSB Chair for the period of the annual report), Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Roger Thomas (PSB Vice-Chair), and Adam Hill (Swansea Council Deputy Chief Executive).

This was the first PSB scrutiny session held by the Committee, following our decision to adjust the scrutiny work programme and remove the standalone PSB Scrutiny Performance Panel. As such, it was a chance for us to reflect on scrutiny carried out to date, and take an overview of progress made by the PSB, and the current situation.

This letter reflects on what we learnt from the information presented, questions, and discussion. It shares the views of the Committee, and highlights any outstanding issues / actions for your response - main issues summarised below.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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New Governance Structure

A new streamlined governance structure has been embedded and improved the operation, direction and focus of the PSB in the delivery of Well-being Plan objectives. Decision making governance is expedited at a strategic level via a Joint Committee, meeting bi-monthly, consisting of the PSB Statutory members and Invited Participants. Objective delivery groups lead on delivery, each co-ordinated and facilitated by a Statutory Member. Wider involvement has been facilitated with the creation of a Partnership Forum, meeting every six months, for meaningful engagement with a wide range of partners that adds value to the work of the PSB. This includes representation from charities, community groups, and public input. Co-production is very much at the heart of practice.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

The PSB has faced significant disruption since March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with fewer meetings. However, the partnership response to COVID-19, co-ordinated and carried out through relevant emergency planning frameworks and mechanisms, has been effective, and stronger because of the relationships and connections developed over the past few years working together through the PSB. The point was made that the PSB is not responsible for all multi-agency / partnership activity that exists, therefore an absence of PSB meetings during the pandemic has not affected the partnership response to COVID and its effectiveness. It was important for the PSB not to duplicate other structures in place.

Delivery of Well-being Objectives

There are 4 PSB Well-being Plan Objectives, set out in the Well-being Plan published in May 2018, that provide focus for the PSB. These are joint objectives but each with a Statutory Member lead taking ownership of this work:

- Early Years (led by Swansea Bay University Health Board)
- Live Well, Age Well (led by Swansea Council)
- Working with Nature (led by Natural Resources Wales)
- Stronger Communities (led by Mid & West Wales Fire & Rescue Service)

The key focus was on planning and prioritising areas where collectively partners could make the biggest difference.

The delivery of the Well-being Objectives is at the heart of what the PSB is trying to do to make a difference. Performance against these objectives will be the measure of success, and much has been achieved over the past 12 months, as shown in the PSB Annual Report.

In terms of post-COVID recovery, the PSB has been considering areas of focus. Three strategic objectives have been identified to focus on in order to develop a multi-agency added value action plan to build greater resilience over the next 12 months:

1. City for Wellbeing & Wildlife;
2. Green / Climate Change agenda;
3. County Lines, Substance Misuse, Anti-Social Behaviour

We noted that following work undertaken by the Council in compiling a Climate Emergency action plan, all partners will be asked to sign up to a climate change charter and construct their own action plans for their own organisations.

A More Agile PSB

The PSB has also become more flexible and agile in helping to tackle more immediate multi-agency issues, in addition to the more long-term objectives. For example, successful work on community safety, which involved the setting up of a Critical Incident Task & Finish Group to deal with issues relating to street sex working, substance misuse / drug dealing / county lines activity, criminality and anti-social behaviour, focussing on the environment around Swansea High Street. There was clear governance to the PSB, via the Safer Swansea Partnership, and difference made by the PSB in delivering improvements to the area, and countering negative national press about our High Street.

The Issue of Pooled Resources

The PSB is not a fund holding body – there are no pooled resources – however, it is about improving joint working across public services in our area, with organisations committing their existing resources to shared objectives and delivering improvement on issues no one organisation can solve alone.

Future PSB Arrangements

There has been a debate about the number of PSBs across Wales, and whether PSBs should be arranged on a regional, rather than local authority, basis, consistent with the regional footprint of PSB partners and regional collaborations in place. It was felt that a regional PSB may be a better way forward to tackle the issues which we share with neighbouring authorities, and would benefit PSB partners who sit on multiple PSBs, and reduce duplication. The advent of Corporate Joint Committees may however complicate further the regional collaboration landscape.

Scrutiny Views

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

a) Improving the performance framework to better evidence the tangible difference the PSB is making.

Measuring progress is key to any assessment of performance and the effectiveness of the PSB, whether it is about tackling immediate or long-term problems. Whilst Annual Reports serve a purpose, it is important for scrutiny to see a performance framework for the measurement of targets that can help demonstrate the added value of the PSB to scrutiny, and therefore to the public.

The PSB should consider how it could improve the information provided to scrutiny that will provide a greater level of detail in terms of performance monitoring, e.g. sharing of reports by strategic leads that the PSB uses to monitor outcomes and address any barriers, and review work. Ideally, these will show action plans for each objective, metrics, timescales, achievements, outcomes, challenges and risks, etc.

The PSB must be able to clearly articulate the difference it is making, and account for performance and improvement, with a balance of quantitative as well as qualitative data that will help to evaluate the effectiveness of the PSB, whether in the delivery of short, medium or long-term actions.

b) Improving public visibility / messaging about the work of the PSB.

The overall purpose of our scrutiny is to assess the difference that the PSB is making to citizens. Internally we may have a good awareness and understanding of the work of the PSB, but it is less likely that the people of Swansea know what the PSB is.

It is important to understand the added value of having a PSB to improvement, beyond steps taken by the Council, either alone, or through existing partnership working. Although we would agree that the public is less interested in process than results, it could be clearer to citizens what the PSB is achieving and the contribution that it has made. If the PSB has made a difference successes should be attributed to the PSB, and publicised. Given its role and importance, the work of the PSB should be in our consciousness, so would benefit from any efforts to make its work, objectives and outcomes more visible.

c) Pressing the Welsh Government on PSB resources.

Despite the best efforts of Swansea PSB to work around this, we feel that the lack of a pooled resource and discrete budget for PSBs is an impediment to effectiveness. It is surprising that there is no direct funding from Welsh Government and they ought to be pressed further on this to provide more support. We acknowledge that a small amount of funding was provided to help with organisational support, but would agree that the ability of PSBs to be transformational without significant funding, as highlighted by the Future Generations Commissioner, is limited.

We suspect that moving PSBs to a regional footing will need to be achieved first, which may then facilitate decisions around funding to deliver objectives / specific projects.

We appreciate that tackling funding and resource issues is difficult, and doing more with existing resources means a challenge to ways of working. Without additional funding we need to see the PSB being used by partners to improve the way they operate and use their resources to assist each other better, using the 5 ways of working, and helping to achieve the 7 well-being goals, in implementing the Well-being of Future Generations Act to the benefit of our citizens.

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 and the Committee will follow up on progress in addressing these issues in six months.

PSB scrutiny is something that we envisage will take place 2 or 3 times every year. We will arrange the next session in around six months, and hope to engage more widely with other PSB statutory members / key partners with regard to progress in the delivery of agreed PSB Well-being Plan objectives, and effectiveness of the PSB generally. Additionally, we look forward to next year's PSB Annual Report.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR PETER BLACK

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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