

Wednesday 8th February 2017

Dear Cwm Taf Public Services Board Members and Support Team

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide feedback on your draft Assessment of Local Well-being sent to the office in January 2017. I fully recognise the challenges that you have faced in the development of the assessment this time around, and I congratulate you for your efforts.

The first thing I want to do is to make it clear that I fully recognise the challenges that you have faced in the development of the assessment this time around, and I congratulate your team on their hard work and efforts.

My primary focus in providing this feedback is to help you consider how well your work so far will help you to set your collective objectives and undertake well-being planning. For me Public Services Boards (PSBs) are one of the biggest opportunities for the public sector in Wales to change the way we do things in Wales and to collaboratively make decisions and deliver services that will benefit future generations.

Your assessment is a key part of this, and whilst I appreciate that it may not be a full picture by the time you publish it, it is important that it sets out a clear and informed picture of the well-being of RCT and Merthyr and your communities that is relevant now and into the future. **Your assessment should enable you to clearly identify key challenges for your area and communities, and to develop collective objectives that address these challenges.**

I attach a document that gives you detailed feedback on your draft assessment, and what you should think about building on both in the short-term as you move towards well-being planning and in terms of assessing well-being in the future.

During 2017-18 one of your key tasks will be to develop your collective well-being objectives as part of your well-being plan. The legislation requires you to seek my advice on how to take steps to meet your objectives in accordance with the sustainable development principle (five ways of working).

Below I set out some of the things I will be looking for as my office continues to work with you. In my view those PSBs who have showed they are already taking account of the five ways of working will be well placed to develop objectives and well-being plans, which will have benefits for all organisations

involved in terms of maximising their collective contribution to the goals and addressing inter-generational challenges.

I was very pleased to see that you have clearly made a good start with your approach to **involving people and communities** in the development of your assessment, through the Cwm Taf Hub and your *Understanding our Communities* work. I would encourage you to build on this to make sure that you continue to provide opportunities for a broad range of stakeholders and citizens to get involved in influencing the development of your objectives and be able to demonstrate that their input has an effect on what you do.

It is clear that you have presented and interpreted a wide range of data in your draft assessment, and as I said when I attended your PSB meeting recently, I was impressed to see that you have thought about your area's assets as a core part of the process. Whilst you have included some data on **long-term trends** I think there is potential for you to have a greater focus on the long-term in your work going forward, and to explore which of your communities are particularly vulnerable to the long-term trends you identify.

On **integration**, it is pleasing to see that whilst your assessment is structured around the four elements of well-being you have made links between them and explored these links through your stakeholder engagement. This is a good basis to build on and I think you could develop this further by making greater links with the well-being goals as you move towards well-being planning. This will be particularly important in thinking about the relative roles of your different organisations in **maximising your contribution** to the goals.

A key element of the legislation is the focus on **preventing problems** from occurring rather than just responding to them and I see this as a key priority for your well-being planning. This is an area where I would encourage you to give detailed consideration to what the data and evidence are telling you, in order to make sense of key challenges you have identified.

And **collaboration** is key to all of this. You are still the only 'merged' PSB which is to be commended and I feel that your approach of different partners drafting the four briefing documents has demonstrated how well your collaboration is working. You now have the opportunity to take your partnership working to a new level, collaborating with resources and finding new ways to deal with old problems. Your assessment should be helping you to identify the most fruitful opportunities to do this.

Your support team have worked hard to develop this assessment and the people who support your well-being planning will need your full buy-in and support. Key features of this are likely to be the leadership you show and your willingness to give people space and permission to explore new ways of addressing old problems. This cultural change is what the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act) is all about.

In anticipation of the requirement for me to provide advice on how you should take steps to meet your collective objectives I would like to see further detail of how you will use your assessment as you move towards well-being planning. I would appreciate you letting my office know how you have responded to our feedback. With this in mind it will also be important for you to provide my feedback to the scrutiny committee that has the lead for scrutinising the work of the PSB. The need for a more constructive approach to scrutiny has been identified as an important part of maximising collective action at the local level.

I hope that our feedback is clear and useful at this stage. However, I must reiterate that I don't see the development of your assessment as a one-off event. Going forward I will be providing opportunities for PSBs to share learning and best practice which I hope you will be involved in, in order to provide the best platform for you to fulfil your ongoing obligations under the Act.

Kind regards



Sophie Howe,
Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

Feedback from the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales on Cwm Taf Public Services Board Draft Assessment of Local Well-being

1. Introduction

The following report provides feedback to Cwm Taf Public Services Board from the office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales on the final draft of the *Cwm Taf Well-being Assessment Consultation Draft January 2017*. This feedback is based on our project team¹ reviewing the following key documents and discussions:

- Cwm Taf Draft Well-being Assessment March 2017 [Summary Document]
- Cwm Taf Draft Well-being Assessment Appendix 1 - Cultural Well-Being
- Cwm Taf Draft Well-being Assessment Appendix 2 - Economic Well-Being
- Cwm Taf Draft Well-being Assessment Appendix 3 - Environmental Well-Being
- Cwm Taf Draft Well-being Assessment Appendix 4 - Social Well-Being
- Cwm Taf Draft Well-being Assessment Appendix 5- NSF and PWC Stakeholder workshop report
- Discussion between the project team and members of the PSB team on 1st February

It is intended that this feedback should be used to inform both the publication of the assessment in spring 2017 where possible, and the ongoing processes of developing your assessment and well-being planning.

The assessment has been reviewed by the project team using a set of criteria, developed specifically to focus on aspects of assessment production, methodology and analysis and the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act). These criteria enable us to review the wide range of approaches to local assessment of well-being that have been used across Wales. This has also enabled us to provide bespoke feedback to PSBs, highlighting strengths and potential areas for improvement. This consistent approach will also enable the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales to identify key issues and highlight opportunities for shared learning, at a Wales-wide level, for the wide range of public sector and other bodies involved in well-being planning.

¹ Dr. Alan Netherwood, Netherwood Sustainable Futures, Dr. Andrew Flynn, Cardiff University and Dr. Mark Lang, Mark Lang Consulting

While we understand that the well-being assessment is an ongoing process, and that further work will be undertaken in coming months, it is important that the following comments are noted and acted upon as the well-being assessment is developed, adapted and built upon to inform well-being planning across the PSB.

2. National well-being goals

One of the issues we have considered is how effectively the seven national well-being goals have been reflected in the assessment. The WFG Act requires PSBs to demonstrate how they plan to maximise their contribution to the national well-being goals. We understand that PSBs will develop different ways of reflecting well-being, in Cwm Taf's case, the four themes: environmental, economic, cultural and social. However, it is important that there is a clear link between the data, its interpretation and our understanding of how the findings of the assessment impact on national as well as local well-being goals.

It is positive that the summary document re-iterates the requirements of the PSB to utilise and contribute to the national well-being goals. The documents could be improved by more discussion *throughout* of how the findings, challenges and headlines contribute to, or impact on the national well-being goals. The sections in each briefing document which consider how each theme inter-relates could be a place to describe this relationship.

As well as being more explicit about this, there could be a stronger reflection of contribution to cohesion and equality in the briefing documents and some reflection of how the globally responsible Wales goal is relevant to Cwm Taf.

3. Data content – area and place

The WFG Act requires well-being assessments to focus on the area and 'place' and reflect the variety of communities across your area. We have considered the extent to which the data content of your assessment does this.

It is clear from the Briefing Documents that an extensive range of UK, national, regional and local data has been utilised. For cultural, economic, environmental and social well-being, the data, both qualitative and quantitative, provides a rich picture of different communities and communities of interest in Cwm Taf. The commentary and interpretation is, on the whole, extremely well done (see section 6),

particularly in terms of describing the variety of conditions across Cwm Taf's communities. The analysis would have benefitted from this Cwm Taf-wide perspective being consistently interpreted for the four community areas listed in the summary document: Rhondda, Cynon, Taf Ely and Merthyr Tydfil. Understanding the different issues, inequalities and assets in *each* of these areas would provide a clearer picture of distinct challenges and priorities for the PSB.

The assessment could be further improved by including data on critical energy, water and transport infrastructure as well as the other social, environmental, economic and cultural assets listed in each document. This infrastructure is of key relevance to the PSB, service delivery and community well-being.

4. Data content – how people need and use public services

We think it is important that you have a clear picture of the different needs of people and communities now and in the future, and that the implications of these needs are understood. We have considered the extent to which the data content of the assessment focuses on public service needs, within communities and for particular groups of individuals.

A priority for the office is encouraging public bodies and PSBs to make sure that they are firstly involving people and communities in ways that give them greater insights into people's lived experiences of public bodies, and secondly acting upon these insights when they make decisions and deliver services.

It is good to see a clear rationale for the assessment and how it is intended to inform public services, policy-making, commissioning services delivery and those receiving services. It is also good to see the intention of the work influencing "processes, services and money". We look forward to seeing how this will influence the work of all PSB partners through the well-being planning process.

The engagement through the Cwm Taf Hub and *Understanding our Communities* has provided a clear route for feedback to the PSB on public service needs. It is also positive to see how effectively the population assessment and well-being assessment have informed each other and identified specific needs.

The appendices clearly outline a wide range of public service needs and ways in which these needs might be met and the sections on strategic challenges and local assets are well communicated. There is potential for the summary document to more effectively summarise the key messages from the appendices. For example, the list of questions on public services on page 24 are a set of profound challenges for the PSB within a discussion on assets. The summary document could be improved by

having a clearer structure to communicate the wealth of analysis and information from the appendices on public service needs.

5. Quantitative and qualitative analysis

We recognise the challenge of balancing data, insights and evidence to produce a rounded understanding of well-being of communities and individuals in the short, medium and long-term. One of our main considerations has been the extent to which both quantitative and qualitative analysis and methods in assessments provide a broad picture of environmental, economic, cultural and social well-being, together with initial commentary on the implications of this 'picture' for communities, i.e. what really matters?

The level of interpretation and analysis in each of the briefing documents is commendable. Summaries for each theme are well-balanced, with clear language and a clear explanation of determinants of well-being. The briefing documents provide strong commentary on what the implications of the data are for well-being, drawing on UK, Wales and local sources and the results of the consultation, to paint a nuanced picture of well-being across the area. Despite the comments made in point 3 (on the four community areas), there is plenty of local data to describe well-being from a community and individual perspective across Cwm Taf. Provision of sections on 'headlines', 'challenges' 'assets' and 'risks of not maintaining or improving well-being' provide clear messages on critical issues for the PSB. Specific comments on each briefing document are provided below:

Cultural well-being: This document is clearly set out with the interpretation and commentary grounded in community-level data. It provides a rich local picture of culture across Cwm Taf. It reflects community views well and provides a good insight of community dynamics, providing examples from across the area 'which can be built on'. It identifies 'what we need to do and know'. The document is well referenced and has woven statistics into a robust narrative. It could be improved by a section (like the other documents) on links to other themes and should include greater reference to the national well-being goals.

Economic well-being: All of the above comments on the cultural briefing document apply to this one too. Given the range of data, this document is well framed and evidenced. Of particular note is the addition of the section 'risks of not maintaining or improving well-being' regarding economic challenges to Cwm Taf. This is a good way of communicating the importance of particular issues to the PSB. The document also acknowledges the need for better engagement with the private sector, more analysis of the potential impact of the City Region Deal and

tourism. It provides a good analysis of links with other themes. It could be improved by providing data on the nature and location of employment across Cwm Taf and some analysis of its resilience.

Environmental well-being: Again, this section is of similar quality to the others. In addition it provides a 'vision' or scenario on environmental well-being. This is well written, but greater clarity of its origin and what it is for would be useful. Of particular note is the very strong connection of people to the environment and the potential of community access to publicly-owned land. It could be improved by a greater understanding of the different implications of environmental well-being across the four community areas.

Social well-being: This document has a very strong health focus with some information on ageing population and housing. The health evidence is well referenced and uses local data well but could provide greater clarity on key issues and challenges. In many places, the volume of evidence gets in the way of the headlines. The document could benefit from editing with a clearer structure and numbering as the different sections are difficult to follow, similar sections on assets, challenges, and risks to the other briefing documents. This is clearly only a partial picture of social well-being and would benefit from more emphasis on the role of the third sector, social networks and social capital within Cwm Taf.

These documents in tandem with the stakeholder input in Appendix 5 provide a strong basis for the PSB to begin to prioritise issues for the well-being plan and determine what further assessment is needed.

6. Key challenges

It is important that well-being assessments, in assessing the state of well-being, focus on key challenges to well-being over the short, medium and long-term, as well as the positive attributes and assets in the area. This includes the trade-offs between different well-being goals, tensions, and deficits within the area.

Clearly, the approach taken to the briefing documents discussed previously provides a clear indication of the key challenges to well-being in Cwm Taf. The structure of the assessment covering assets, challenges and risks provide a good level of interpretation and analysis which the PSB can build on.

It is positive that the stakeholder consultation on the assessment has started to explore the tensions and trade-offs between the four themes. This should be further developed as well-being planning continues.

The asset-based approach to the assessment seems to have been very positive, not only in terms of pointing out challenges and acknowledging the scale of deficits, but equally focusing on what is good about the area. The potential of utilising publicly-owned land is a good example of how this approach (not just focusing on problems) is potentially opening up new opportunities for public sector collaboration in the area.

As previously mentioned, the summary document, while listing the key challenges, would benefit from a clearer structure to communicate the quality of the analysis, the breadth of the engagement process and the implications of the challenges to public service delivery in Cwm Taf.

7. Engagement, involvement and collaboration

The WFG Act clearly indicates that collaboration and involvement are two of the five ways of working which PSBs need to consistently apply to their work. As a consequence, we have been particularly interested in the level and method of engagement, involvement and collaboration across the partnership in producing the assessment, including engagement with communities, public, third sector and private sector organisations.

It is pleasing to see the wide range of stakeholder engagement via *Understanding our Communities* and the *Cwm Taf Hub* and the range of other methods which have been used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data to inform the assessment. The collaboration between the University Health Board, Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, and Natural Resources Wales in producing the four briefing documents is a good example of public bodies working well together. Also of note is the link between Merthyr Tydfil's local development plan process and the well-being assessment. It will be important that the LDP considers all aspects of the assessment in its production, as well as the results of the economic well-being briefing document.

The wider stakeholder engagement has clearly brought a wide range of bodies and individuals together to contribute. It is also positive that there is clarity for stakeholders that there will be continuing engagement through the consultation period, and that the assessment is an ongoing process. The online library of information is also an excellent resource being developed for the organisations and individuals to utilise.

It is good that the assessment has identified that the private sector needs to be more involved in well-being planning in the area. This is clearly important for the *economic* theme but equally important for their insight into other aspects of well-being. This is especially relevant to the context of cultural well-being and in relation to the City Region and its impact on, for example, commuting patterns and town centres across Cwm Taf. It would be helpful for this to be addressed in future work on the assessment and well-being planning.

8. Integration

One of the key aims of the WFG Act is to develop integration at all levels across the public sector. We believe it is important to understand the inter-relationship between environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being. As a result we have been keen to consider the level of integration between traditional policy and organisational silos in producing the assessment.

It is pleasing to see the work described in Appendix 5 and in the summary documents on integration across the four well-being themes. Effort has clearly been made to begin to understand the relationship between economic, social and environmental and cultural well-being in Cwm Taf and we will be interested to see how work continues to inform the well-being planning process.

Also of note is the commitment to integrate the population assessment and well-being assessment work through the Cwm Taf partnership. More clarity on how this has informed the well-being assessment and an understanding of its implications for public services across Cwm Taf would be useful.

9. Foresight and future trends

One of the key challenges from the legislation is to consider the short, medium *and long-term* well-being throughout the assessment and plan process. We are interested in the level of foresight and use of future trends analysis in producing the assessment and recognition of the well-being of future generations.

There are some examples in the assessment where long-term data has been used around flooding, ageing population and housing and climate change. Further understanding of how these issues might impact on the four community areas and individual communities would further improve the documents, i.e. which communities are particularly vulnerable in the long-term to these issues?

Generally, there needs to be far greater attention given to the potential impact of long-term trends in Cwm Taf as a whole and under the four themes. This is something we would expect to see improve as the assessment is developed and you move towards well-being planning.

A simple approach could be adopted to address this issue. Summarising the short, medium and potential long-term challenges for each theme, identifying where there are potential significant implications for the area and gaps in your understanding of long-term trends, might help the PSB to prioritise critical challenges where collective action is needed.

The Welsh Government will be producing their Future Trends Report in May 2017. The current plan is to include 6 key themes: population, economy, natural resources and climate change, health, land use and infrastructure and societal change. As it develops your assessment will need to take account of data included in this but should aim to provide a clearer emphasis on long-term challenges to well-being in the initial assessment published in the coming months.

10. Cross boundary issues

Integration and collaboration are central to public bodies applying the sustainable development principle to their activities. One of our aims has been to review the extent to which the assessment has considered cross-boundary issues for regional and national action.

We believe that a more detailed analysis of key regional and cross-border issues which affect the Cwm Taf area would be beneficial, to inform well-being planning. The assessment could provide a clearer explanation of the area's 'role' within the region.

Although there is a section on the City Region in the economic well-being briefing document, it is unclear what the implications of this major, long-term project might be for *all* aspects of community well-being across the area. Even if the specific impacts are uncertain at present, it will clearly have an influence on all four themes. The project's potential influence should be included for all sections of the assessment, as it is likely to have multiple impacts across different parts of Cwm Taf.

Greater insight could be provided on the significance of commuting patterns to well-being, critical issues for transport infrastructure and landscape management and the nature of inter-relationships with neighbouring authorities and other regional partners such as Brecon Beacons National Park. To this end,

it will also be important for Cwm Taf PSB to consider the conclusions of neighbouring local assessments of well-being as plan production develops.

11. Data quality and data gaps

The WFG Act intends that well-being planning will be a continuous process where the evidence base will be gradually improved over time, to enable public bodies and others to understand and plan for well-being in their communities. We are keen to understand the approach of PSBs to data quality and data gaps during the assessment and data issues moving forward.

It is really positive to see the sections “What additional information would help in relation to this headline?” and “what more do we need to know?”. This approach should also be utilised in the social well-being briefing document. The report by NSF and PWC in Appendix 5 also provides a detailed analysis of data gaps. These separate lists provide a good understanding of specific data gaps, and could be improved by communicating which of these are critical to developing priorities over the coming year and which would be addressed over a longer time period.

A section summarising the above would improve the summary document. This will be important to understand if there are any patterns in data needs from across the four themes, and how these gaps can be best addressed. This would enable the PSB to build on existing work and plan for improving data quality during the next year and beyond, helping PSB partners to build in data research and management into their business and corporate planning. It would also provide an indication to Welsh Government, the office and Data Unit Wales on PSB needs.

12. Use of the sustainable development principle

The statutory guidance places a responsibility on PSBs to *maximise* their contribution to the well-being goals by utilising the sustainable development principle in the way that they operate. We have been keen to understand how the sustainable development principle and five ways of working have been utilised during well-being assessments.

Clearly there are elements of your approach which show how the five ways of working have been considered as part of the process of assessment development.

- *Involvement and engagement* – via the Cwm Taf Hub and Understanding our Communities project
- *Collaboration* – between the two Councils, Health Board, NRW and the stakeholders involved in the process
- *Integration* – through stakeholders exploring the interconnections between different themes
- *Long-term* – use of readily available climate, housing and population data
- *Prevention* – early years intervention discussed in the social well-being briefing document

However, there is less evidence that the sustainable development principle has been applied as a *modus operandi* to this assessment. It is useful to have reference to the sustainable development principle in each briefing document, but it is unclear how this applies to the analysis or the whole process of assessment production.

The assessment would benefit from being clearer about how the principle has changed the approach of the PSB to this work, and how the principle will shape the well-being planning process.

13. Looking forward to plan production

A critical issue for our review of this assessment was whether the documentation was clear about how the work would be carried forward to develop local objectives and plan production.

The assessment is very clear on purpose and audience – to inform public sector service delivery and to aid the development of a well-being plan. There is a clear statement that this is a work in progress and that it is intended to be used as a tool/catalyst for the PSB, and to be further developed in coming months. However, there is less clarity about the process of developing the assessment into a plan, and how the challenges highlighted in the summary document will be explored as part of plan production. The document could be strengthened by providing greater clarity of this process, the timetable and how stakeholders and the public can engage in coming months.

14. Overview

The documentary analysis above has identified a number of areas where we believe the assessment could be strengthened, both in the short term, before its publication and over the medium-term as the response analysis develops and the plan is produced. In addition to this we organised a phone call to

discuss the assessment with members of the PSB team who had been involved in the process. The aim of the phone call was to provide us with an opportunity to clarify/explore particular issues that our initial review has highlighted and to enable the PSB to flag up issues which are part of the broader context of assessment production.

A number of clear, recurring broad themes have emerged from our review and the conversation. Clearly the level of interpretation and analysis of well-being across the area and the extent of collaboration and engagement in the process are particularly positive and should be commended. The work provides a strong basis for the PSB to begin to prioritise issues for the well-being plan and determine what further assessment is needed.

However, at the same time, we believe the following issues need to be tackled to improve the assessment as it evolves:

Summary document – This document should provide a clearer and more coherent summary of the process of engagement, the key findings from the four themes, key challenges, potential implications for public services (and the challenge to the PSB), data gaps and the process of plan production. There has been some very positive work done on the assessment, reflected in the briefing papers, and this document needs to capture and communicate this good work.

Interpretation of the data – More explanation is needed of how the issues identified under each well-being theme impact *locally* on the four community areas.

Well-being goals – A clearer understanding is needed of the relationship between the themes, challenges and opportunities identified on the seven national well-being goals.

City Region – It would be helpful to have more analysis of the potential impacts of this major project on Cwm Taf and its communities.

Regional context – More analysis of Cwm Taf's place in the region and its inter-relationships with neighbouring areas and communities, and their impacts on well-being, would strengthen the document.

Future Trends – Greater attention needs to be given to the potential impact of long-term trends on well-being in the Cwm Taf as a whole and in the four community areas.

It is recognised that some of these may be addressed in the PSBs proposed activities between now and the final publication of the assessment whereas some could be addressed as the assessment evolves and is kept as a 'live' document.

We hope that the issues raised above will inform the ongoing work of the PSB so that these elements are reflected more strongly as the PSB moves forward.