

Thursday 23rd February 2017

Dear Monmouthshire 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.

The first thing I want to do is to make it clear that I fully appreciate 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 Monmouthshire 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 pleased to see that you have made a good start with your approach to involving people and communities in the development of your assessment, through Our Monmouthshire, the strong narratives about your five community areas and your focus on public services. It will be important for you to build on this as you move towards well-being planning, making 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 significant work has produced the assessment, and your narrative and interpretative style is complemented by interesting and intelligent use of quantitative and qualitative data. Your work on future trends could build on this by providing more insight into key issues for the long-term well-being of Monmouthshire, in particular through considering what challenges they present, and which specific localities, communities and people are likely to be most affected or are most vulnerable. I understand that the local authority is setting up a Future Monmouthshire programme to build capacity and foresight to help develop solutions to some of your biggest challenges and this may well present a good opportunity to build your analysis of future trends. I would be interested to hear more about how this progresses.

It is helpful that you map out how the key themes and issues you've identified contribute to multiple well-being goals. This approach lends itself to greater consideration of the integration between economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being. 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. This is an area where I would encourage you to give detailed consideration to what the data and evidence is telling you, in order to make sense of key challenges you have identified.

And collaboration is key to all of this. In Gwent you already collaborate regionally through the G7 and Gwent Strategic Well-being Assessment Group (GSWAG) and 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 Monmouthshire Public Services Board Draft Well-being Assessment

1. Introduction

The following report provides feedback to Monmouthshire Public Service Board from the office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales on the consultation draft of the Monmouthshire Public Services Board Well-being Assessment. This feedback is based on our project team¹ reviewing the following key documents and discussions:

- Monmouthshire Public Service Board Well-being Assessment: Summary
- Monmouthshire Public Service Board Well-being Assessment
- Discussion between the project team and members of the PSB team on 16th February.

It is intended that his feedback should be used to inform both the publication of the assessment in spring 2017 where possible and recognising the timescales that exist, but it is more important that it informs 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.

While we understand from our conversation that the Well-being Assessment is an ongoing process, and that further work is currently being undertaken, 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.

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

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 as the WFG Act requires PSBs to demonstrate how they plan to maximise their contribution to the goals. It is important that there is a clear link between the data in assessments, its interpretation and our understanding of all aspects of well-being in our communities. We understand that PSBs will develop different ways of reflecting well-being, in Monmouthshire's case between economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being across the area and within the five community areas.

It positive to see that work has been done to understand the contribution of the topics covered in the assessment to the well-being goals, set out in the matrix in Figure 2. This section could be improved by providing context of why the matrix was produced, who produced it and what it tells us. Whilst some of this information is implicit, it would be useful to understand the rationale behind the links and the nature of the contribution. It might also be useful for you to consider where reference to the national goals might enhance and reinforce the narrative throughout the documents.

This matrix is a useful resource, particularly as you move towards well-being planning. Key questions which could be explored as part of your well-being planning could be: how could the PSB make the greatest contribution in the areas identified? Which are the areas of PSB activity where there needs to be an improvement in contribution? Where are the opportunities to contribute to multiple goals by addressing key issues? This analysis would inform plan development and enable the PSB to understand the potential significance and impact of collective actions to maximise their contribution. This will be especially important if the assessment meets the aspiration stated: 'things that public services should do to maximise the well-being of current and future generations.'

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 noted that the PSB is using five community areas across Monmouthshire to build up a picture of well-being for specific communities: Abergavenny and surrounding communities, Monmouth and surrounding communities, the Heart of Monmouthshire, Severnside and Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley. It is very clear from our phone conversation with the PSB team that these areas are ones which are resonant to

communities, and provide the best way for partners to capture local data. It will be important to maintain this approach as you build your evidence base on well-being in the area.

The main assessment document provides a clear, well-set out and well-illustrated set of community area summaries. The narrative in each is commendable, drawing out the main well-being issues under the four themes. The interpretation of the key indicators and broad approach to describing local well-being provides a very clear understanding of challenges in each locality. The approach adopted to understand the well-being implications of Bletchley Barracks is particularly positive.

The summary could be strengthened by duplicating this interpretative style. At present this is more descriptive and it is less clear what the key issues for each community are. The 'issue' in some cases is treated as being implicit to the indicator, for example in ranking areas against each other, i.e. what is significant about the spatial differences across the area? What do vacancy rates in town centres tell us about well-being?

What could be made clearer in both documents is the significance of the issue to the locality. Significance is an issue that will also be addressed in later sections of this feedback.

4. Data content – public service needs

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 my 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. For example, it is positive to see how engagement has included a focus on public services via Our Monmouthshire and how the population needs assessment has fed in to the well-being assessment process around ACEs and mental health across the area.

It is positive to see a distinct section on 'the challenges and the opportunities facing public services' towards the end of the main document and summary with the intention that these will help to inform the consultation on the assessment. Both documents would benefit from a clearer explanation about how these particular issues were 'distilled' from the data – are these recurrent themes? Are they judged to be the most

significant? Some of these issues are generic and focused on what needs to be done (natural and built environment, culture) some are very service-focused (healthy behaviours).

There appear to be 'headlines' missing from this list which have not been picked up here and will need to be tackled by public services in partnership with private and third sectors, for example 36% of people living in poverty, 20% of children living in poverty, major flood risks to communities, and rural isolation. Care should be taken not to lose this bigger picture by focusing on services too early in the assessment process. Despite this section trying to communicate that this is not a priority list, it could be misinterpreted as a summary of the key issues (which it isn't). A key question for your well-being planning will be how public services re-organise themselves to tackle the collective challenge of these major issues.

5. Quantitative and qualitative analysis

We recognise the challenge of balancing data, insights and evidence to produce a rounded understanding of the well-being of communities and individuals of 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?

As discussed in point 3 the narrative and interpretative style has been complimented by intelligent use of quantitative and qualitative data. It is positive to see that in the main document the data does not drive the narrative, but illustrates the well-being 'story'. The layout, tables, graphs and illustrations are well used to communicate the key challenges and provide local information.

The data and analysis in all sections is of a very high standard. The following paragraphs provide more specific feedback on each theme and include some suggestions for improvement to the balance and communication of key issues:

Economy: The focus on positive aspects of living in Monmouthshire and assets and the nature of hidden inequalities is notable. It is especially good to see the narrative on the economic benefits, skills and assets of an elderly and ageing population as well as the impact on service demand. Information on the agri-economy which appears in the environment section could also be used here to illustrate the importance of this element of the local economy. This could also be used within the five communities. For these communities, it will be important to understand where people work, the role of businesses in the community, the vibrancy of town centres, and the role of independent retailers? Were businesses contacted and engaged on their

role within these communities? Further qualitative information on the nature of the non-monetary economy and social economy could also be included here given the emphasis on social capital in other sections.

As a general point, the influence of Brecon Beacons National Park could be given more emphasis in terms of its impact on Monmouthshire as it is a major and unique social, environmental, economic and cultural asset.

Social: The key challenges to social well-being rurality, access to services, health and housing are well illustrated by both quantitative and qualitative data. The summary utilises comparisons around these areas, and needs further explanation of what these comparisons illustrate. Both documents (as previously stated) could be clearer about the significance of key issues for Monmouthshire as a whole and for the five communities e.g. how important/significant are rural isolation, fires, anti-social behaviours (ASBs), or cyber-crime and where and why is there a difference? What are the impacts on well-being? In many cases there is a description of facts and some interventions but little understanding of significance. More interpretation is needed. The narrative around carers is a good example of where this has been done well.

We also believe that there could be a stronger focus on social assets in Monmouthshire and that qualitative evidence could be gathered as part of the well-being process as it progresses, e.g. the strength of the community sector in supporting social well-being, the nature of social networks, the social fabric of towns and villages, and the role of the non-monetary economy, physical assets, food banks, community asset transfer etc.

Environment: The main document has an excellent level of interpretation, description and localisation. It is particularly good at drawing out implications for well-being. Like other sections, this information could be better utilised in the summary.

For both documents, the significance of well-being issues for Monmouthshire as a whole and in each community area could be better summarised. For example, the assessment could give an indication of the scale of the problem of water quality in Monmouthshire's rivers, the main opportunities for emission reduction, and whether increased flooding will make flood risk management in specific localities difficult. Some of the text is indicator-focused and would benefit from more interpretation. Highways are clear but how resilient are they to climate change? Is waste collection unsustainable? Is green infrastructure being adequately managed? Which designated sites are particularly vulnerable?

Culture: Data on libraries, language, ethnicity, schools, landscape, heritage and events provides a broad understanding of cultural assets across Monmouthshire. This section in the summary is less interpretative than other sections (and is quite indicator-focused) and would benefit from a more nuanced description of

cultural activity. For example, the assessment points out the strength of the voluntary sector but could provide a better description of their activity and an understanding of their capacities. The section in the main document provides some good qualitative data and description of the vibrancy of Monmouthshire's culture around the arts, language, social networks, cultural activities, local food and drink, agricultural shows, information networks and volunteering.

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, assets and deficits within the area.

As described in earlier points in this document, the assessment provides a clear indication of what the key challenges are to well-being across Monmouthshire. This could be enhanced throughout with further interpretation of their significance for Monmouthshire and the five communities - how they will impact on well-being, and also why these vulnerabilities or strengths manifest themselves in particular locations. It would be helpful to have a clearer understanding of which communities and people have resilience or are vulnerable to current and future trends. This will help the PSB to understand what preventative approaches can be developed, and should be a focus of future work on the assessment.

The impact of Brexit, climate change, austerity, welfare reform, the ageing population, health trends, rural accessibility are referred to many times, in many different contexts, and could be brought together in a summary of key issues emerging from the assessment so far (please also see comments in point 4 regarding the final section on public services).

There is very rich data in the document that represents insightful analysis and this should feature more strongly in the Summary and a concluding section within the main document.

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 clear Our Monmouthshire has involved citizens, community groups, partners to gather both quantitative and qualitative data to inform the assessment. 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. It is understood from the phone conversation with the PSB team that a great deal of effort has been expended to inform the assessment through consultation – as highlighted in the Appendix 2. The consultation results are very clearly presented and woven well into the narrative.

It is unclear from the assessment to what extent the private sector has been involved or consulted on well-being in the area, and this was also noted as an area for further work as part of the phone conversation with the PSB team. This is clearly important for the 'Economy' section, but equally important for their insight into other aspects of well-being. It is especially important to understand the context of different spatial scales from the agricultural economy across Monmouthshire, town centres to the role of businesses in supporting social and cultural activity.

It is also good to hear how much this assessment has acted as a catalyst to develop collaborative working across the PSB. We also learnt from the phone conversation that the collaboration with GSWAG, statutory partners and Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) have helped you to develop your data, building capacity between these organisations. It would be good for the final assessment to explain the benefits of this and the nature of their contribution. This collaboration is positive and should be built on as you move forward into 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 important that the data listed in the assessment is explored across traditional policy and organisational silos, to interpret what this means for well-being in the area.

As previously discussed the PSBs approach to exploring well-being in Monmouthshire under the four themes and in the five geographical areas provides a rich understanding of the challenges, and in some cases the spatial 'picture' of well-being. There is scope for greater consideration of data from each section (and within each section) alongside that of the others, and consideration of the inter-relationships between data.

This is an area for you to give further consideration as you finalise your assessment for publication, and as you move toward well-being planning. There is scope for greater integration and more exploration of the relationship of policy/challenges between each theme – for example rural isolation and mental health, economic development and flood risk, social capital, information technology and economic development. This will enable the PSB to understand key drivers of well-being determinants and to identify preventative activity and integrated approaches to improve well-being.

We understand from the phone conversation with the team that work is already underway and planned to further investigate the findings of the assessment with partners. These inter-relationships should form a part of this activity.

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. We understand from our conversation that there is an opportunity to include more analysis of the impact of future trends on well-being and we would encourage you to pursue this within the PSB.

The section on Future Trends in the main document could provide greater interpretation of the impact and significance of population trends, climate change, economic trends, habitats and ecosystem services, and health trends. What are the likely impacts on a Monmouthshire level – what challenges do they present, and which specific localities, communities and people are likely to be most affected? Are current approaches adequate? For example, on climate change, how significant is change likely to be in terms of water, soils and its impacts on agriculture? These are the types of issues which could be explored by the PSB as you move toward well-being planning.

This was discussed and acknowledged as a challenge going forward during the phone conversation with the PSB team. A simple approach could be adopted to address this issue. Summarising the short, medium and long-term challenges for each section, 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 understanding and analysis of key regional and cross border-issues which affect Monmouthshire would be beneficial, to inform the well-being plan process. The assessment could provide a clearer explanation of Monmouthshire's role and relationship with its neighbouring authorities in Wales and England.

There will be a regional aspect to relationships in terms of all four well-being themes, and in terms of service delivery and access to services and it would be helpful for this to come out more strongly in the assessment. It will also be important for PSBs to consider the conclusions of neighbouring local assessments of well-being as plan production develops. This was discussed as part of the phone conversation with the PSB team.

As discussed as part of the phone conversation, the assessment would also benefit from some further interpretation of how the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Project might impact on all aspects of community well-being across Monmouthshire. Even if the specific impacts are uncertain at present, it will clearly have an influence on cohesion, equality, resilience and so on. The project's potential influence should be included for all sections of the assessment, beyond the 'Economic well-being' section, as it is likely to have multiple impacts across different parts of Monmouthshire. Greater insight could also be provided on the significance of commuting patterns to well-being in Monmouthshire, critical issues for transport infrastructure and the nature of inter-relationships with Welsh and English authorities and other regional partners.

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.

This is an area where we would expect to see the assessment improve. Both documents would benefit from a section providing understanding and analysis of data gaps from different aspects of the work to understand what might be needed in the short term, medium and long-term – i.e. what is missing that matters now to inform Plan development, what would be good to build over the medium term and what longer term data issues are. 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:

Long-term – through the Future Trends Section

Involvement – through the consultation work undertaken and currently underway

Collaboration – through work with statutory partners, GAVO and GSWAG

While prevention is mentioned in the context of early years intervention and environment, the assessment would benefit from a description of how the preventative agenda is critical to well-being planning and public service delivery.

There is little evidence that the sustainable development principle has been applied as a modus operandi to this assessment (see comments on Integration in point 9). There are several references to the five ways of working, without a description of the significance of these to this particular piece of work.

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.

This is also an area where we would expect to see the assessment improve:

- the summary could be improved with a section on 'Next Steps' to engage people, communities and partners in the well-being plan process in Monmouthshire.
- while the main document does include a section 'Next Steps', it focuses on the 'internal' PSB process and timetable, and it is not clear how this will happen, or how stakeholders can remain involved.

Importantly, further explanation is needed to communicate how the material collected in the assessment is going to be used to formulate objectives for the PSB. The recent work with partners to explore the data should be part of this narrative.

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. It is clear that this has been a huge undertaking over a relatively short period of time, and that partners have put a great deal of effort into producing the draft assessment. The body of work so far, and particularly the way it has been managed and structured, should enable the PSB to develop its evidence and communicate the significance of the data to Monmouthshire as a whole and within the five community areas.

We believe the following issues need to be tackled to improve the assessment:

Significance of the data – more explanation of the significance of the data and key challenges to well-being

Challenges – provide a clearer analysis of short, medium and long-term challenges (and opportunities) to well-being

Well-being goals – a clearer understanding of the relationship between the issues identified and the seven national well-being goals.

Integration across themes – a greater focus on the inter-relationships between the data gathered on the four themes and the implications of this for well-being

Regional context – a greater understanding of Monmouthshire's inter-relationships between Welsh and English neighbouring authorities and Brecon Beacons National Park, including the potential influence of the City Region Project.

Future trends – greater attention given to the potential impact of long-term trends on well-being in Monmouthshire as a whole and in the five community areas

Moving forward – provide a clearer description of how the assessment data is intended to be used, how data gaps are to be managed and how well-being planning will progress

It is recognised that some of these may be addressed in the PSB's proposed activities between now and the final publication of the assessment.

We hope that the issues raised above will inform this collaborative work so that these elements are reflected more strongly by the PSB in the final Monmouthshire Public Service Board Well-being Assessment and throughout the well-being planning process.