

Setting of well-being objectives – Newport City Council

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Background: our examinations of the setting of well-being objectives

- 1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) places a ‘well-being duty’ on 48 public bodies. The duty requires those bodies to set and publish ‘well-being objectives’ that are designed to maximise their contribution to achieving each of the Act’s seven national well-being goals¹. They must also take all reasonable steps, in exercising their functions, to meet those objectives.
- 2 The Auditor General must carry out examinations to assess the extent to which public bodies have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting their well-being objectives². We are carrying out a rolling programme of these examinations, up to early 2025³.
- 3 To do something in accordance with the sustainable development principle means acting ‘in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. To achieve this, a public body must take account of the five ways of working: long term, integration, involvement, collaboration, and prevention⁴.
- 4 We designed an assessment framework to enable us to assess the extent to which public bodies have applied the sustainable development principle when setting their well-being objectives. **Appendix 1** sets out further information on our approach, including a set of ‘positive indicators’ that illustrate what good could look like.
- 5 In designing our approach, we considered what we could reasonably expect from public bodies at this point in time. Public bodies should now be familiar with the sustainable development principle and ways of working and be seeking to apply them in a meaningful way. At the same time, we appreciate that public bodies are still developing their experience in applying the sustainable development principle when setting well-being objectives. Therefore, the examinations include consideration of how public bodies are applying their learning and how they can improve in future.

¹ The seven national well-being goals are; a prosperous Wales, a resilient Wales, a healthier Wales, a more equal Wales, a Wales of cohesive communities, a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, and a globally responsible Wales.

² Section 15 (1) (a) Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

³ The Auditor General must carry out examinations over the period set out in the Act, which begins one year before a Senedd election and ends one year and one day before the following Senedd election.

⁴ Section 5 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Carrying out our examination at Newport City Council

- 6 The aim of this examination was to:
 - explain how the Council applied the sustainable development principle throughout in the process of setting its well-being objectives;
 - provide assurance on the extent that the Council applied the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives; and
 - identify opportunities for the Council to further embed the sustainable development principle when setting well-being objectives in future.
- 7 We set out to answer the overall question ‘to what extent has the Council acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting its new well-being objectives?’. We did this by exploring the following questions:
 - Was the process the Council put in place to set its well-being objectives underpinned by the sustainable development principle?
 - Has the Council considered how it will make sure it can deliver its well-being objectives in line with the sustainable development principle?
 - Has the Council put in place arrangements to monitor progress and improve how it applies the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives?
- 8 We discussed the timing of the examination with the Council and we tailored the delivery to reflect its specific circumstances. We undertook our review during March/April 2023.
- 9 We gathered our evidence in the following ways:
 - reviewing key documents; and
 - an interview with officers responsible for the process the Council followed to set its well-being objectives.
- 10 Our evidence is limited to these sources.

The Council’s well-being objectives

- 11 The Council published its well-being objectives as part of its Corporate Plan 2022-27. The Council’s Corporate Plan can be viewed on its website.

Exhibit 1: Newport City Council's well-being objectives 2022-2027

Well-Being Objective 1 Economy, Education and Skills

Newport is a thriving and growing city that offers excellent education and aspires to provide opportunities for all.

Well-Being Objective 2 Environment and Infrastructure

A city that seeks to protect and enhance our environment whilst reducing our carbon footprint and preparing for a sustainable and digital future.

Well-Being Objective 3 Quality Social Care and Community Services

Newport is a supportive city where communities and care are at the heart of what we do.

Well-Being Objective 4 An Inclusive, Fair and Sustainable Council

Newport City Council is an inclusive organisation that places social value, fairness and sustainability at its core

What we found

The Council has applied the sustainable development principle in setting its well-being Objectives but resourcing and monitoring their implementation are not yet developed

- 12 The Council drew on a wide range of sources when setting its well-being objectives which helped it to understand current and future need, risks and opportunities. These sources included the Welsh Government's Future Trends report 2021, Gwent Wellbeing Assessment 2022, Newport Wellbeing Assessment 2021, and the Gwent Population Needs Assessment 2022. The Council also considered the strategies of a range of partner organisations. This enabled the Council to base its well-being objectives on a good understanding of current and likely future trends and issues.

- 13 The Council involved a range of stakeholders to inform its well-being objectives. This included:
- consultation with the public on the well-being objectives, including enabling responses through use of free wi-fi on buses, which received approximately 700 responses;
 - drawing on the results of its other public consultations including for example the Council's consultation on its draft Digital Strategy;
 - workshops with councillors and officers from across the Council; and
 - discussions with partners.
- 14 The Council used the results of this involvement activity to inform its well-being objectives. For example, it made changes to the wording of its objective 'Quality Social Care and Community Services' as a result. This means the selection of Council's well-being objectives took into account the perspectives of a range of stakeholders with an interest in the Council's objectives. While the Council was able to gather a significant number of responses, it did not specifically consider how it could gather the views of under-represented groups as part of its consultation. However, the Council recognises that the extent of its involvement activity was partly limited due to the pandemic. It also recognises there may be opportunities to involve stakeholders earlier in the process.
- 15 In setting its well-being objectives the Council considered how its objectives might integrate with each other and the objectives of other organisations. For example, the Council identified a range of strategies of partner organisations that will impact on its own activities. It also involved partners in discussions around the selection of its well-being objectives. It also consulted on its well-being objectives at the same time as the Gwent Public Services Board. The Council is also already collaborating with partners in several areas. This demonstrates that the Council is considering how its well-being objectives align with each other and those of other organisations.
- 16 Whilst the Council's Corporate Plan covers a five-year period, the Council was able to articulate where it is balancing short and long-term needs. For example, in relation to social care, and the need to address both short-term issues as well as thinking about the longer term.
- 17 The Council has not yet developed detailed plans to resource its Corporate Plan, and therefore the delivery of its well-being objectives. The Council's service plans demonstrate how service area projects and actions are designed to contribute to the achievement of the Council's Well-being Objectives, together with timescales and intended outcomes. However, service plans do not generally include financial information. The Council is in the process of reviewing some of its plans in light of recent rises in costs and inflation. The absence of costed plans to deliver its well-being objectives poses a risk to their successful implementation. However, the Council intends to review the Corporate Plan each year, and to consider its affordability and deliverability as part of this process.

- 18 The Council is still developing the measures it will use to monitor progress against its well-being objectives. It will be important for the Council to make progress with this as the absence of measures makes it difficult for the Council to monitor and assess progress against its objectives.
- 19 The Council has not formally reviewed the process it undertook to set its well-being objectives. But it was able to identify what had worked well, such as the officer workshops which it felt helped to avoid the risks of silo working. It was also able to identify areas that could be improved including as noted above, considering involving stakeholders earlier in the process.

Recommendation

Developing measures of progress

- R1 As the Council develops the measures it will use to monitor progress against its Well-being objectives, it should ensure they reflect the sustainable development principle – for example enabling it to monitor:
- progress against long and short-term objectives; and
 - progress against objectives that cut across multiple of its own services and other organisations.

Appendix 1

Key questions and what we looked for

The table below sets out the question we sought to answer in carrying out this examination, along with some sub-questions to guide our evidence gathering. They are based on the positive indicators we have previously used in our sustainable development principle examinations, which were developed through engagement with public bodies and informed by advice and guidance from the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. This list is not a checklist, but rather an illustrative set of characteristics that describe what good could look like.

To what extent has the body acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting its new well-being objectives?

Planning: Was the process the body put in place to set its well-being objectives underpinned by the sustainable development principle?

<p>Has the body used data and other intelligence to understand need, risks and opportunities and how they might change over time?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The body has a clear and balanced assessment of progress against previous well-being objectives that has been used to inform the body's understanding of the 'as is'/short-term need. • The body has set well-being objectives based on a good understanding of current and future need, risk and opportunities, including analysis of future trends. This is likely to be drawn from a range of local and national sources, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Public Services Boards' well-being assessments – Regional Partnership Boards' population assessments – The results of local involvement/ consultation exercises – Service monitoring and complaints – Future Trends report – Natural Resources Wales' State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) for Wales and Area Based Assessments • The body has sought to understand the root causes of problems so that it can address negative cycles and intergenerational challenges through its well-being objectives.
<p>Has the body involved others in developing its well-being objectives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The body uses the results of involvement to help select its well-being objectives. That involvement – whether primary, secondary or a combination – reflects the full diversity of the population. • Involvement reflects good practice and advice from the Future Generations Commissioner.

<p>Has the body considered how the objectives can improve well-being and have a broad impact?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The well-being objectives have been designed to improve well-being in the broadest sense and make a contribution across the seven national well-being goals. • The well-being objectives have been designed to reflect and capitalise on the connections between different areas of work. • There is a well-developed understanding of how the well-being objectives impact on/relate to what other public bodies are trying to achieve and opportunities to work together.
<p>Has the body designed the objectives to deliver longer-term benefits, balanced with meeting short-term needs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The body has set objectives that are sufficiently ambitious and have been designed to drive activity across the organisation. • The objectives are designed to meet short and longer-term need. Where objectives are set over a short to medium timeframe, they are set in the context of longer-term considerations or ambitions.
<p>Resourcing and delivery: Has the body considered how it will make sure it can deliver its well-being objectives in line with the sustainable development principle?</p>	
<p>Has the body considered how it can resource the well-being objectives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources have been allocated to ensure the objectives can be delivered over the short and medium term, but the body has also considered longer-term resources, risks and/or how it can resource longer-term objectives. • The body has allocated resources to deliver preventative benefits, where these are described in its well-being objectives.

<p>Has the body considered how it can work with others to deliver their objectives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The body is drawing on its knowledge of partners objectives/activity, its relationships and collaborative arrangements to make sure it can deliver on cross-cutting ambitions.
<p>Monitor and review: Has the body put in place arrangements to monitor progress and improve how it applies the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives?</p>	
<p>Has the body developed appropriate measures and monitoring arrangements?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance measures are designed to reflect the sustainable development principle, eg by focusing on outcomes that cut across departmental/ organisational boundaries and deliver multiple (including preventative) benefits over the longer term. • There is a 'golden thread' that will allow the body to clearly and transparently report on progress to meeting the objectives.
<p>Is the body seeking to learn from and improve how it has applied the sustainable development principle to setting its well-being objectives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The body shows self-awareness and a commitment to improving how it applies the sustainable development principle so that it can do so in a meaningful and impactful way. • The body has learnt from setting previous well-being objectives and from applying the sustainable development principle more generally and has improved the process for setting its new well-being objectives. • The body has or plans to reflect on how it has applied the sustainable development principle in this round of setting well-being objectives.



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