

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFG Act)

1. The Core Requirements

1.1 The WFG Act received Royal Assent in April 2015 and its overarching aim is to get all public bodies in Wales who are subject to the Act to work in a way that improves economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being to help us create a Wales that we want to live in now and in the future.

1.2 The Act gives a legally-binding common purpose by establishing the seven well-being goals which national government, local government, local health boards and other specified public bodies must work towards. Those seven well-being goals are stated as:

1. A prosperous Wales;
2. A resilient Wales;
3. A healthier Wales;
4. A more equal Wales;
5. A Wales of cohesive communities;
6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; and
7. A globally responsible Wales.

1.3 The Act also details the ways in which specified public bodies must work, and work together to improve the well-being of Wales. Based on the sustainable development principle, the Act confirms five ways of working to support decision making which ensures public bodies take account of:

- a. Long-term thinking – balancing the need to take action to address current issues with the need to meet long term needs of Wales.
- b. An integrated approach – considering how a body's objectives may impact upon the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being and considering how an individual body's objectives impact upon other public bodies' objectives.
- c. Engagement – involving the people and communities with an interest in the well-being objectives, engaging them in finding sustainable solutions.
- d. Collaboration – acting collaboratively with other bodies, or different parts of a body acting together in a co-productive way, to assist in the achievement of the body's objectives.
- e. Preventative action – deploying resources to undertake action now in order to prevent problems occurring or getting worse.

The five ways of working supports existing commitments such as the Welsh language, equalities and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

1.4 The Act sets out key requirements to be delivered through a number of different functions:

- The individual role of public bodies covered by the Act to require them to set well-being objectives, publish a well-being statement, review well-being objectives and report on progress.

- The collective role of public services board and the functions they must undertake, including the preparation of an assessment of local well-being and a local well-being plan.
- The collective role of specific town and community councils which meet the criteria set out in the Act to comply with their duty to take all reasonable steps towards meeting the local objectives in the local well-being plan that has effect in its area.

1.5 The remainder of this report focuses on these key requirements and the proposed approach in Carmarthenshire to ensuring compliance with the Act requirements.

2. Individual well-being duty on public bodies

2.1 Individual public bodies named in the Act must set well-being objectives that maximise their contribution to achieving the well-being goals. Once objectives are agreed the public body must also publish a well-being statement (which can be incorporated into a Corporate Plan) to explain why they consider the objectives will contribute to the well-being goals and how the sustainable development principle has been applied.

2.2 The national well-being goals will act as a consistent framework for all 44 public bodies in Wales to use. Those public bodies named in the Act are as follows:

- Local Authorities;
- Local Health Boards;
- Public Health Wales NHS Trust;
- Velindre NHS Trust;
- National Park Authorities;
- Fire and Rescue Authorities;
- Natural Resources Body for Wales (Natural Resources Wales);
- the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales;
- the Arts Council of Wales;
- the Sports Council for Wales (Sport Wales);
- the National Library of Wales;
- the National Museum of Wales (National Museum Wales);
- the Welsh Ministers.

2.3 The well-being goals should be considered in the context of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The goals must be considered as an integrated set and not in isolation of each other as there will often be dependencies between goals.

2.4 Public bodies must publish their first set of organisational well-being objectives against the national well-being goals by March 2017.

2.5 Public bodies must also publish an annual report on the progress they have made in meeting their well-being objectives. This could be incorporated into the Council's Annual Report and Improvement Plan.

2.6 Welsh Government state that this should not be seen as ‘an additional layer’ to existing activity. This should be the primary way that a public body sets its priorities with the expectation that it will be embedded within existing corporate processes. Therefore, for the Council the organisational objectives and annual report should be reflected in the future Corporate Strategy and Annual Report and Improvement Plan.

2.7 Carmarthenshire County Council has for a number of years aligned its organisational objectives and business planning process to the outcomes of the Integrated Community Strategy. Therefore, the Act requirements will not be a significant change in approach however the Council will need to align to the new national well-being goals and it is proposed that this will be implemented in the 2017-18 business planning cycle.

2.8 The introduction of the five ways of working is the fundamental shift that the Act introduces to the way in which public bodies review, plan, decide and deliver on the future of its provision. The five ways of working requires public bodies to be able to evidence and demonstrate that they have given due consideration of the long-term impact, helping to prevent problems occurring or getting worse, taking an integrated and collaborative approach, and considering and involving people of all ages in the decisions it takes.

2.9 The five ways of working needs to be applied to everything that the Council does in terms of reviewing, planning and deciding on its future approaches including within the following service areas:

- Corporate planning;
- Risk management;
- Workforce planning;
- Performance management;
- Financial planning;
- Procurement; and
- Asset management.

2.10 As a result, the Council is currently developing a new impact assessment process to support its decision making processes which will incorporate the five ways of working as well as other statutory requirements relating to equality impact assessment (Equality Act 2010) and Welsh language impact assessment (Welsh Language Standards 2015) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child (UNCRC). The intention is to test and introduce this new impact assessment process during 2016-17 via report cover sheets.

3. Collective well-being duty on public services boards (PSB)

3.1 The Act places a well-being duty on specified public bodies to act jointly via PSBs to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of their area by contributing to the achievement of the well-being goals.

3.2 PSBs will be established in each county from April 2016 onwards (to replace the former Local Service Boards) and will be responsible for:

- a. assessing the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in their areas. The first assessment needs to be published no later than May 2017 and discussions are underway with colleagues in Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire about a possible three counties approach to undertaking this assessment;
- b. setting local objectives that are designed to maximise their contribution within their areas to achieving those goals. The local objectives will be based on the findings of the needs assessment. These local objectives will be set out in a local well-being plan, the first of which needs to be published no later than May 2018;
- c. the taking of all reasonable steps by members of boards (in exercising their functions) to meet those objectives. The PSB will need to prepare and publish an annual report on the steps they have taken since the publication of the well-being plan.

3.3 The Council must make administrative support available to the PSB.

3.4 Carmarthenshire County Council will be a statutory member of the new PSB. The first meeting of the PSB in its new format is scheduled to take place on the 12 May 2016. Other members of the PSB will be as follows:

Statutory members

- Carmarthenshire County Council;
- Hywel Dda University Health Board;
- Mid & West Wales Fire and Rescue Service; and
- Natural Resources Wales.

Invited Participants, who are invited to participate in the Board's activities:

- Welsh Ministers;
- Chief Constable of Dyfed Powys Police;
- Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Commissioner;
- Director, Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services;
- Director of Public Health, Hywel Dda University Health Board;
- Regional Jobcentre Representation, Department of Work & Pensions;
- Principal, Coleg Sir Gâr;
- Senior Representative University of Wales Trinity Saint David;
- Representation from National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Company;
- Representation from Brecon Beacons National Park Authority; and
- Regional Representation from Arts Council of Wales.

3.5 The Act also stipulates a number of 'Other Partners' the PSB must engage with. These are key partners in the area who exercise functions of a public nature, have a material interest in the well-being of the area and deliver important public services in relation to the preparation, implementation and delivery of the work of the board. The PSB will establish an engagement mechanism and on-going communication with these key partners. It is likely that the PSB will hold one extended meeting per year with representatives of the 'other partners' in attendance. These partners include (but are not limited to):

- Community and Town Councils;
- Public Health Wales NHS Trust;
- Community Health Council;
- Higher Education Funding Council for Wales;
- Sports Council for Wales;
- National Library of Wales;
- National Museum of Wales;
- National Botanic Garden for Wales; and
- Future Generations Commissioner's Office.

3.6 In preparation for the Act the LSB undertook a partnership structure review during 2015 and in order to support the work of the PSB and deliver against the new national well-being goals it has been agreed to establish three thematic groups:

- Healthy Families and Communities;
- Fair and Safe Communities; and
- Prosperous and Resilient Communities.

In addition to the thematic groups an Operational Delivery Group (ODG) will be established to undertake the ground work on the undertaking of the assessment of need of the county, contributing to the formulation of PSB priorities, co-ordinating the development of the Well-Being Plan and developing and monitoring an outcomes based performance framework.

3.7 In order to ensure democratic accountability there is a requirement for a designated local government scrutiny committee to scrutinise the work of the PSB. The scrutiny committee can require any member of the Board to give evidence, but only in respect of the exercise of joint functions conferred on them as a member of the Board. Arrangements to enable this to be taken forward in Carmarthenshire are currently being considered and it is likely that the Council's Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee will be requested to undertake this function on behalf of Carmarthenshire PSB.

4. Collective role for community councils

4.1 The Act places a duty on certain community and town councils to take all reasonable steps towards meeting the local objectives included in the local well-being plan that has effect in its areas. A community or town council is subject to that duty only if its gross income or expenditure was at least £200,000 for each of the three financial years preceding the year in which the local well-being plan is published.

4.2 If a community or town council is subject to the duty, it must publish a report annually detailing its progress in meeting the objectives contained in the local well-being plan. Community or town councils which do not meet the criteria for being subject to the duty but still wish to contribute towards meeting the local objectives in the local well-being plan are welcome to do so on a voluntary basis.

4.3 In Carmarthenshire, the community and town councils that meet the criteria for being subject to the duty are likely to include:

- Llanelli Town Council;
- Llanelli Rural Council;
- Pembrey & Burry Port Community Council;
- Carmarthen Town Council; and
- Llannon Community Council.

4.4 The PSB will be required to liaise with these councils to ensure that their local objectives support and feed into the county-wide well-being plan and where possible add value to the work of the public bodies.

4.5 It is proposed to establish an informal officer forum between PSB support officers and the five community and town councils in Carmarthenshire subject to the duty in order to consider how to work in partnership to take this approach forward.