

Review of Involvement – Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.

The team who delivered the work comprised Matthew Brushett, Euros Lake and Steve Frank.

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Summary report

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015

- 1 The Well-being of Future Generations Act (the 'Act') requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. The Act also puts in place a 'sustainable development principle' which tells those public bodies covered by the Act how to go about meeting their duty.
- 2 Public bodies need to make sure that when making their decisions they consider the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales both now and in the future. There are five things that public bodies need to think about to show that they have applied the sustainable development principle. These are set out in **Exhibit 1**. Following these ways of working will help public bodies to work together better, avoid repeating past mistakes and tackle some of the long-term challenges facing Wales.

Exhibit 1: the sustainable development principle and the five ways of working



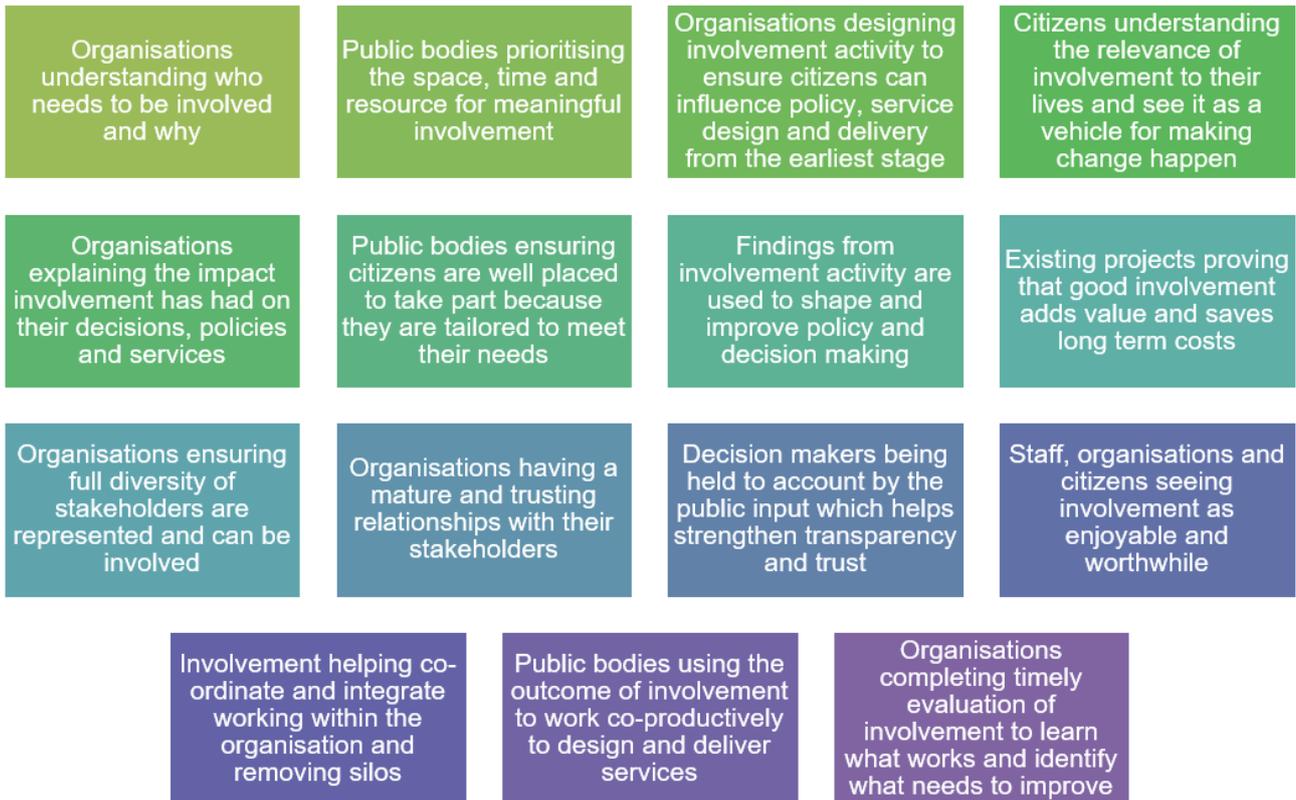
Source: Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – [The Essentials](#)

Involvement

- 3 Involvement is about having rich and meaningful conversations with the people in their community, finding out what matters to them, and reflecting that in the decisions that Authorities take. Involvement requires organisations to be open to influence from citizens and stakeholders, moving to a culture of ‘working with’ rather than ‘doing to’. In contrast to consultation, involvement approaches work with people at earlier stages, such as helping to identify issues and potential solutions, and being supported to remain involved right throughout design, implementation and evaluation processes.
- 4 Drawing on our most recent feedback presentation considered at the Fire and Rescue Authority’s (the ‘Authority’) Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee on the 13 May 2019 and Fire Authority meeting on the 16 December 2019, the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales’ [Journey Checker](#) and the [National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales](#) developed by Participation Cymru, **Exhibit 2** summarises the characteristics of an organisation with an effective approach to involvement.

Exhibit 2: the characteristics of a public body which has an effective approach to involvement

Effective involvement is embodied by...



- 5 Authorities should therefore set their agenda by listening to people, meaningfully involving them throughout the decision-making process, and being open to real change as a result. It is vital that activities and mechanisms for involving people are appropriately planned, monitored and reported, so they can be developed, challenged or championed. Ensuring that staff and organisations have the necessary skills, structures as well as time and resources to involve the public effectively is vital. This ensures that public services in Wales reflect what is important to the public and their needs, rather than what we may traditionally think works best.

Scope of our audit

- 6 Given the challenges for public bodies in embodying the sustainable development principle, we have on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales reviewed the Authority's approach and management of involving stakeholders when proposing service and policy changes, and in the design of activities. We undertook a more detailed look at how the Authority involves stakeholders in the design and delivery of arson reduction and road safety initiatives.

Our findings

- 7 Overall, we have concluded that **the Authority engages with stakeholders in arson reduction and road safety but needs to develop an integrated corporate approach to involvement activity.** We came to this conclusion because we found the following.

The Authority is engaging with staff and partners in developing its approach to arson reduction but could do more to strengthen its approach to understanding the impact of all its involvement work

- 8 The Authority's strategic approach to involvement is steadily developing. It has several different strategic plans which set out elements of its approach to involvement. These include its wellbeing objectives; the Authority's Draft Corporate Plan 2020-25 which has an integrated theme on involvement. For example, Strategic Aim One – People - includes an action to "Inspire Co-production – the involvement of all" and "Developing engagement tools that are designed to reach our target audience and that can be used by all of our employees." The Authority is also developing a corporate strategic policy on engagement which it intends to align with the aims of the Authority's Corporate Plan 2020-25.
- 9 Overall, we recognise that the Authority has developed a good approach to involving staff and partners on the development of the Authority's Joint Arson

Group Delivery Plan 2019-20. For instance, the Authority identified which stakeholders it needs to engage with and how they contribute to Arson reduction.

- 10 The Authority's engagement work with young people is particularly noteworthy. The Authority has engaged with 163,861 young people through education programmes over the last five years and used the results of evaluation from this engagement work to find better ways to involve young people in redesigning its services. For example, linking the Authority's activities to the school curriculum and involving scout leaders in national recognised key stage badge work such as the 'Youth Shaped' programme. Better involvement with youth groups is resulting in tailored communications through a dedicated YouTube channel and tailored arson prevention social media messages aimed at young people¹.
- 11 The Authority has a well-co-ordinated programme of events and station open days linked to national and local safety and community events such as the Royal Welsh Show, Machynlleth Carnival, HeForShe campaign, road safety such as Cruz Cymru, and co-ordinated across Public Service Board areas. Over two thirds of fire stations have hosted community events and collected a variety of feedback.
- 12 As a result of the joint Data Summits in 2019 held with Dyfed Powys Police the Authority is strengthening its data sharing arrangements with its partners. This is helping the Authority to make better use of data to identify who to engage with on its arson prevention work. The Authority can also react quicker to community intelligence by better evaluation of social media at Fire Control and headquarters. Making better use of data and responding more quickly to social media feedback and commentary enables the Authority to prevent arson and also react to incidents quicker. As a result, fire control staff are better able to predict likely incidents.
- 13 The Authority has a number of positive examples on involvement activity including:
 - recognition in the Draft Corporate Plan 2020-25 that engagement skills and competencies required to better serve communities, is integral to the work of the Authority's staff training and development departments. Engagement skills form part of the Authority's People Strategy 2019-24;
 - reviewing the last five years of survey results on all consultations which is helping focus and improve the new Corporate Plan 2020-25. An examination of over 4000 surveys, dozens of community safety events, and 300 social media posts identified emerging common themes. In particular, being able to quantify the value the public places on discretionary services such as road safety, education work, and the desire for closer partnership working which have been given higher priority in the Corporate Plan 2020-25;
 - making it easier for people to get in touch. The Authority has a single email address for all consultations. The Your Opinion Matters Landing Page on the Authority's website gives a range of options and information for people to get engaged with the Authority. Options include completing on-line surveys and

¹ [Mid And West Wales Fire and Rescue Service promotional video](#)

forms, submitting written material, contact by telephone, invitation to a fire station to meet the local Fire Authority Member and/or station manager and use of social media;

- using the website to provide information and guidance on prevention of arson and other emergencies for high risk groups like older people or people with disabilities, and how to get involved in improving services to ensure their own safety;
- we see good involvement of front-line staff, service users, environmentalists, farmers and suppliers in vehicle and safety equipment procurement exercises. More appropriate technology is now in place to prevent and respond to incidents of arson including drones, diggers to create fire breaks, and organic fire suppressants; and
- the Authority recognises there is scope to improve how it learns from and disseminates its evaluation and learning from involvement work with partners and the public. For example, via a You Said, We Did type of web page on the website. Evaluation of engagement activity is improving but this is not always publicly available so others can learn from it and ensure those involved can see what impact their contributions are making. The Authority's latest Annual Equality Report 2018-19 highlights what the involvement process is.

- 14 The metrics and measures for involvement in the engagement policy count actions and activities rather than judging impact and outcome, and therefore not sufficiently rounded to enable the authority to identify what works and why. Performance measures for arson reduction are also not measuring the social value from arson prevention. For example, in improving air quality, contributing to nature recovery, and maintaining the business continuity of local farmers and businesses.

The Authority is doing more to involve stakeholders in delivering road safety initiatives despite the fragility of budgets

- 15 There were 108 road deaths in Wales in 2018-19, 46 in Mid and West Wales – and 1,029 seriously injured across Wales.² There has been a Welsh Fire and Rescue Services Road Safety Strategy for the period 2015-20 which has supported the three Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales to focus on and reduce fatalities and injuries caused by road traffic accidents. To accompany the strategy, Welsh Government provides local authorities with funding under the Road Safety Grant. This was introduced in 2000 and has been provided to local authorities each year to contribute towards addressing road safety problems in their respective areas. The grant is in addition to local authorities' own highway and traffic engineering

² [Recorded road casualties in Wales](#)

budgets. For 2019-20, Welsh Government allocated circa £1.8m in revenue to the 22 Local Authorities in Wales to deliver a range of road safety awareness, education and interventions.

- 16 Fire and Rescue Authorities have a statutory duty to respond to road traffic collisions and deal with the consequences of these. The Authority responds to significantly more road traffic collisions than property fires (approximately twice as many). Despite its positive road safety work, the Authority does not receive any specific funding from either the annual Local Authority grant allocation or Welsh Government grant programmes to support its road safety prevention work. Given the challenging financial climate, funding for road safety initiatives is likely to reduce as the Authority has to support other prevention requirements such as for Home Safety and Arson. The potential loss of this service will be compounded by a reduction in local authority road safety investment.
- 17 We were told that four of the six local authorities the Authority engages with have cut their road safety team, and those road safety posts that remain have been integrated into wider Active Travel teams. Authority staff note that this has resulted in a reduction in council road safety education and intervention activities work. This challenging financial situation is not helped by the fact that, the Welsh Government's Fire and Rescue Services Road Safety Framework 2015 – 2020 is out of date and no new national Road Safety Framework is planned. A new Transport Strategy for Wales is planned in 2021 but the National Assembly for Wales' report on The Future Development of Transport for Wales 2019 makes no reference to road safety.
- 18 The Authority undertakes road safety campaigns³, events and involves partners in the design and delivery of these. The Authority's social media and website is a good showcase for these events⁴.
- 19 The Authority understands who to involve and engage with and has developed wider engagement arrangements. For example, the Road Safety Action Plan has been developed with engagement and input from local councils, the Met Office Weather team, roadbuilders, farming groups, motoring and motorcycle clubs, prisons, and road safety data analysts in other UK Fire and Rescue Authorities. The Authority is also engaging with technology manufacturers to encourage them to do more on road safety. Examples include tarmac and road surface experts, the infrastructure needed for driverless cars, satnav companies, and tyre manufacturers.
- 20 Examples of the Authority's engagement and involvement work on road safety includes:

³ [Mid and West Wales FRA Road Safety Strategy](#)

⁴ [Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue website motorcycle road safety campaigns, On-The-Road/Motorbikes](#)

- working with biker and motorcycle clubs in key locations such as bike shows, view/stopping/layby locations, cafes and bike shops and training bike club leaders to cascade safety messages;
- providing safety messages to over 40,000 pupils in 2019 which is contributing to a levelling off of the numbers of young people killed and seriously injured in road traffic accidents in the Authority area;
- recruiting dedicated road safety ambassadors to target drivers at casualty hotspots and using more impactful imagery and information when Authority staff engage with road users;
- using fire stations as 'community assets' and encouraging a wide range of joint public service and third sector road safety activities is creating a safe environment for young people to talk about road safety issues;
- a co-located police officer in the community safety team is helping police understanding of road safety issues and challenges facing the Authority in delivering these services;
- Community groups and specialist charities are involved in training firefighters to deal with fatalities, and communities feeling loss from bereavements; and
- training front-line staff to be better equipped at consultation and engagement work to better gather the views of the public. In particular in using the national Incident Recording System (IRS) to record suggestions and observational data, and in training firefighters to be better listeners.

21 The Authority is learning from what works well. Examples of evaluation include the Welsh Government review in May 2018 of road safety, local reviews of Biker Down, Fatal 5, Revolutions, Domino, and Dragon Rider⁵. The Authority is learning from road safety initiatives in Sweden, Kent, Staffordshire, and Gloucestershire and using this to enhance and strengthen its prevention and road safety work focusing on 'hearts and minds' behaviour change prevention work. However, we counted 25 national and local road safety initiatives and as a result the safety message risks being diluted.

22 The Authority recognises it has more to do in involving cycling groups as it's a key target group in local tourist agencies. Senior managers recognise despite the growing popularity of cycling in mid and West Wales there is not the infrastructure in place to accommodate large groups of cyclists and this represents an enhance road traffic accident risk.

⁵ [Examples of road safety initiatives hosted by Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority](#)

The Authority could do more to make involvement more of an ongoing and inclusive process

- 23 The Authority is doing more focused stakeholder engagement activity which is increasingly data and intelligence led. Opportunities exist to utilise the networks it has to involve all its communities earlier in designing prevention activity and make a reality of the plans it has for a more systematic and ongoing approach to involvement.
- 24 Better analysis of data identified links between poor weather and road deaths in certain hotspots, deaths by middle aged motorcyclists, young motorcycle passengers, collisions at certain times of day and older drivers as a result of poor manoeuvring. These results are shared with motorcycle, car clubs, garages and driving organisations. As a result, engagement activity is better targeted.
- 25 We see steady progress with some areas for improvement from last year's audit but the Authority has particular challenges in long term workforce planning with a high number of vacancies and lots of people acting up and covering more senior posts. These challenges are not helped by the ongoing demand of participating in 44 Public Services Boards (PSB) committees/groups that the Authority sits on. The Authority needs to better link things such as on call firefighter recruitment, volunteer recruitment and leadership development to help address its long-term workforce planning challenges.
- 26 The Authority produces bilingual public documents and easy to read versions. Significant numbers of Welsh speakers work in the service and have been provided with Cymraeg comma lanyards and badges. The Authority invites service users to complete a 'People We Serve' Questionnaire after an incident or at a community event. Online performance monitoring information states 1360 surveys were completed over 2019. 412 were completed in Welsh, and 214 people stated they had a disability. However, the evaluation of survey findings is not reported or used strategically to drive improvement.
- 27 However, too much involvement activity is traditional consultation activity and senior managers recognise they can do more to make involvement more systematic and move away from the set piece one off type of engagement activity. The new corporate engagement policy, its planned work on the community data hub and senior officer commitment to involve others in co-production should help the Authority to address this issue.
- 28 The Authority recognises there is more scope to feedback learning from involvement and share this with partners and the public. For example, via a You Said, We Did type of web page on the website. Evaluation of engagement activity is not always publicly available so others can learn from it and ensure those involved can see what impact their contributions are making. We also think there is scope to involve young people and partners in website content and social media communication design.

- 29 The Authority does not enable all those who may want to contribute in other languages/mediums to do so. There is no provision throughout the consultation that encourages or accepts contributions in British Sign Language (BSL) or in languages other than Welsh and English. It needs to do more to widen its appeal and encourage people from more economically or socially deprived areas, including those who may be on low or no incomes, to get involved.
- 30 Consequently, we conclude that although the Authority recognises it could do more to involve hard-to-reach groups, and despite the good work of the Ethnic Youth Support Team and Llanelli Multicultural Network Group it needs to be able to demonstrate its consideration of how it involves community groups.

Proposals for improvement

- 31 Rather than list proposals for improvement we have produced a self-assessment for the Authority's staff and members to use in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of its current approach to involvement. This self-assessment can be used at both a corporate strategic level but also on individual projects to judge how well the Authority is doing and where change is needed to ensure involvement is mainstreamed and made sustainable. This tool is not to be completed and sent to the Wales Audit Office/Audit Wales. It is for the Authority to use to challenge, scrutinise and evaluate its own performance and identify how and where it can improve its work.

Exhibit 3: self-assessment

Action	We do this well on every occasion and do not need to improve our approach at all	We do this well some of the time but there are opportunities to improve our approach	We are not good at this and need to improve our approach
We have a strategic approach and corporate framework for involvement which directs activity			
We understand who needs to be involved and why			

Action	We do this well on every occasion and do not need to improve our approach at all	We do this well some of the time but there are opportunities to improve our approach	We are not good at this and need to improve our approach
We prioritise the space, time and resources for meaningful involvement			
We have designed our involvement activity to ensure that citizens and partners can influence our policies and plans			
We have designed our involvement activity to ensure that citizens and partners can influence how we design and deliver services			
We have made clear to citizens and partners how their involvement will help improve their lives			
We have made clear to citizens and partners how their involvement with us will result in change happening			

Action	We do this well on every occasion and do not need to improve our approach at all	We do this well some of the time but there are opportunities to improve our approach	We are not good at this and need to improve our approach
We explain the impact involvement has had on our decisions, policies and services			
We tailor our approach to involvement to ensure all citizens and partners can take part			
We use the findings from involvement activity to shape and improve policy and decision making			
We can demonstrate that our approach to involvement saves money and avoids duplication with the similar activities carried out by our partners			
Our approach to involvement allows our partners to hold us to account for the decisions we make			

Action	We do this well on every occasion and do not need to improve our approach at all	We do this well some of the time but there are opportunities to improve our approach	We are not good at this and need to improve our approach
Our approach to involvement allows citizens to hold us to account for the decisions we make			
Our approach to involvement is enjoyable and worthwhile			
Our approach to involvement helps us to integrate our work to avoid silos			
We use the outcome of our involvement to work co-productively to design and deliver services			
We undertake timely evaluation of involvement to learn what works			

Action	We do this well on every occasion and do not need to improve our approach at all	We do this well some of the time but there are opportunities to improve our approach	We are not good at this and need to improve our approach
We undertake timely evaluation of involvement to identify what needs to improve			

Appendix 1

Examples of involvement approaches in UK Fire and Rescue Authorities

Other fire and rescue authorities in the UK are involving their stakeholders strategically and where this works well, they tend to do this regularly and collaboratively.

In 2019 the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service published an independent analysis of the responses to the 'Your Service, Your Voice' consultation⁶ about the transformation of the service and closer operational integration with the Scottish Ambulance Service. Overall the exercise generated in 1563 responses, the majority of which were from individuals, plus 32 public service partners, and 85 other organisations. Methods included a well-planned series of 'warm up' public information exercises explaining what the service does and how the public will benefit from change. Three years' worth of consultation findings and complaints were also reviewed to find any trends. Consideration of people living in different areas and with protected characteristics was also considered, and representative groups were involved at early stage to design the exercise. A key finding is that a sustained focus on prevention is the best way of protecting individuals. However, the exercise also finds that whilst staff are open to change, the public are more sceptical and see proposals as propping up shortfalls in other public services.

East Sussex Fire and Rescue Authority conducts regular engagement activity rather than 'one off' set piece consultations. An annual calendar of engagement activity is shared with partners and activity is co-ordinated and integrated with others where possible. Ideas and proposals are regularly tested through the Authority's Online forum and in dedicated community safety sessions of the county council led Citizen panel. All "Ask the Fire Authority" sessions, open days, and roadshows in the area have a theme based on a corporate objective and results are reviewed independently by a regional reference panel of experts, plus the local Police and Crime Commissioner. Regular surveys are carried out on themes rather than policies. A series of Consultation Principles are set out on the Authority's website⁷.

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority regularly engages with its communities to give them the opportunity to say what they want from the Authority. West Yorkshire engages early before they develop plans, sharing data and intelligence with partners on designing involvement activity. The Authority also targets underrepresented groups such Travellers, and its involvement work is integrated into its inclusion and diversity activity. The Authority carries out regular online surveys and evaluations on the quality of service; satisfaction, complaints; school visits; Safe & Well visits; and changes to fire cover. The Authority finds that people may not know enough about the wider role of the fire and rescue service. This makes it difficult for stakeholders to comment about something they

⁶ [Scottish Fire and Rescue Service: 'Your service. Your voice' consultation](#)

⁷ [East Sussex Fire and Rescue Authority website: Government Consultation Principles](#)

know little about. In response the Authority has produced an interactive online guide and video about the services provided by the Authority⁸.

⁸ West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority, [Results of public consultation and what changes as a result](#)



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