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Well-being of Future Generations: An examination of 'Establishing a New Youth Service to Support Young People' – **Gwynedd Council**

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This document is also available in Welsh.

The team who delivered the work comprised Jeremy Evans, Alan Hughes and Euros Lake under the direction of Huw Rees.

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Summary report

Summary

Why we undertook the Examination

- 1 In accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) the Auditor General for Wales (the Auditor General) is statutorily required to examine public bodies to assess the extent to which they have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when:
 - a. setting their well-being objectives; and
 - b. taking steps to meet them.

The Act defines the sustainable development principle as 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'

- 2 The Auditor General must provide a report on his examinations to the National Assembly for Wales at least a year before each Assembly election. The first such report must be published by 2020, before the 2021 Assembly election.
- 3 During 2018-19 the Auditor General is undertaking examinations across the 44 bodies covered by the Act to inform his report to the National Assembly.
- 4 In May 2018, the Auditor General published his report, 'Reflecting on Year One – How have public bodies responded to the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)'. He concluded that, public bodies support the principles of the Act and are taking steps to change how they work.
- 5 In developing our approach to undertaking the examinations during 2018-19 we engaged with a range of stakeholders including through our pilot work during 2017-18. We also worked closely with the Future Generations Commissioner.
- 6 As the preliminary work in year one included a consideration of how public bodies had set their well-being objectives the principal focus of this work is the way in which public bodies are taking steps to meet their well-being objectives.
- 7 The findings in this report are based on fieldwork that we undertook during the period November 2018 to January 2019.
- 8 This report sets out our findings from our examination of a step the Council is taking to meet its well-being objectives, namely to: Establish a new youth service across Gwynedd to support young people to learn and develop skills for personal, emotional, social and educational purposes.
- 9 It also sets out the Council's initial response to our findings.

What we examined

- 10 In order to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle public bodies must take account of the following 'ways of working':

Exhibit 1: the 'five ways of working'

The table below sets out the 'five ways of working' as defined in the Welsh Government's 'Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 The Essentials'¹ document.

| The Five Ways of Working |
|--|
| Long-term The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs. |
| Prevention How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives. |
| Integration Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies. |
| Collaboration Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives. |
| Involvement The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves. |

- 11 Our examination found that: **The Council has acted in accordance with elements of the sustainable development principle, but further work is needed to fully embed the five of ways of working.**

¹ Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 The Essentials, Welsh Government (2015)

Detailed report

Part 1 – Examination findings

The Council has acted in accordance with elements of the sustainable development principle, but further work is needed to fully embed the five of ways of working

The Council has remodelled the youth service to make it more sustainable, but service provision is mostly driven by financial constraints rather than an understanding of long term service demand

What we looked for

- 12 We looked for evidence of:
- a thorough understanding of current and long-term needs and the associated challenges and opportunities;
 - planning over an appropriate timescale;
 - resources allocated to ensure long-term benefits; and
 - appropriate monitoring and review.
- 13 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for the 'long-term' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.²

What we found

- 14 We identified the following strengths:
- following the 'Her Gwynedd' budget consultation the Council decided the existing model of service provision was unsustainable.
 - the Council has established a more flexible model for its youth service which has the potential to improve its resilience and ability to respond to future budget pressures.
 - the service's increased resilience gives the Council greater certainty that a service for Gwynedd's young people will remain in place for the foreseeable future, thus contributing towards its well-being objective to ensure that Gwynedd citizens can "enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives".

² See Appendix 1

15 We identified the following opportunities for improvement:

- despite responding to service users' views, the Council's approach is mostly reactive and driven by a changing operating context – specifically, financial constraints. The Council's perception of the benefits of establishing a scalable operating model is mostly centred around helping it to respond more easily to budgetary pressures.
- data sources used to inform the new model mostly focused on understanding the needs of current service users with little use of data to model future demand on the service.

The Council recognises the preventative benefits that a sustainable and accessible youth service provides, but could do more to understand the root causes of the problems that the service is trying to prevent

What we looked for

16 We looked for evidence of:

- a thorough understanding of the nature and type of problem the step could help prevent from occurring or getting worse;
- resources allocated to ensure preventative benefits will be delivered; and
- monitoring and review of how effectively the step is preventing problems from occurring or getting worse.

17 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'prevention' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.³

What we found

18 We identified the following strengths:

- the service remodelling partly focused on preventing the adverse impact of youth clubs closure on the county's rural communities, with the Council opting to remodel the service in its entirety rather than cutting back on the previous youth clubs model.
- the youth service is more closely aligned with the Council's children's services and the prevention and early intervention agenda within social services under the Social Services and Well-Being Act – e.g. some youth workers now form part of Children's Service's Team Around the Family, supporting those on the cusp of entering the formal care system.

³ See Appendix 1

- the youth service is shifting some resources to more preventative activities. It is exploring opportunities to venture beyond the traditional remit of a youth service by providing interventions for parents using illegal substances and ‘living with teenagers’ to prevent potential demand on the Council’s children’s services.

19 We identified the following opportunities for improvement:

- the newly remodelled mobile service has greater ability to ‘pop-up’ as and where needed and is more able to be more dynamic in responding to social issues helping to prevent them escalating
- increasing the effective use of data will give the Council a better understanding of the root causes of issues and demand on the service. This will help the Council to widen the scope of its thinking and have a more holistic approach to early intervention and prevention.

Despite some examples of integration the Council cannot clearly demonstrate its consideration of how the step contributes to its wider well-being objectives, those of its partners, or the national well-being goals

What we looked for

20 We looked for evidence of consideration of:

- how this step could contribute to the seven national well-being goals;
- how delivery of this step will impact on the Council’s well-being objectives and wider priorities; and
- how delivery of this step will impact on other public bodies’ well-being objectives.

21 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for ‘integration’ that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁴

What we found

22 We identified the following opportunities for improvement:

- there is little evidence to reflect that the Council has considered how the step contributes to its wider well-being objectives, those of its partners, or the seven national well-being goals. The Council lacked an integrated approach in remodelling its youth service. Despite the Council and partners’ well-being objectives not being established when the remodelling began, the financially

⁴ See Appendix 1

driven, reactive nature of its approach meant that wider priorities were not effectively considered.

- the Council places great emphasis on applying its 'citizen-focused' approach 'Ffordd Gwynedd' in implementing the step. However, in the step reviewed, the Council cannot demonstrate that 'Ffordd Gwynedd' fully incorporates the sustainable development principle and the five ways of working. Doing so would facilitate greater integration.

There is evidence of increased collaboration at an operational level and in appraising the value of long-standing partnerships but the allocation of transformation fund monies was reactive and not strategically planned, potentially compromising value

What we looked for

- 23 We looked for evidence that the Council:
- has considered how it could work with others to deliver the step (to meet its well-being objectives, or assist another body to meet its well-being objectives);
 - is collaborating effectively to deliver the step; and
 - is monitoring and reviewing whether the collaboration is helping it, or its stakeholders meet well-being objectives.
- 24 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'collaboration' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁵

What we found

- 25 We identified the following strengths:
- as part of the remodelling of the Youth Service, the Council reviewed and terminated the annual funding provided to some long term partners. This enabled the Council to re-direct this funding getting better value and to collaborate with a wider variety of partners.
 - no longer anchored to specific buildings, remodelling the service has resulted in increased opportunities to collaborate with a wider variety of partners at an operational level with greater autonomy given to officers to establish informal partnerships to respond to service users' needs more locally.
- 26 We identified the following opportunities for improvement:

⁵ See Appendix 1

- despite creating more opportunities for collaboration on an operational level, the Council cannot demonstrate its consideration of how to strategically work with partners in delivering the step. This reflects our findings in relation to integration.
- one partner reported a negative shift in engaging with the Council's newly remodelled youth service, impacting adversely on the partners objectives and preventative activities. Again this reflects our findings in relation to integration.
- the Council's allocation of £50,000 transformation fund monies to assist town and community councils wishing to retain a youth club until they have established their own funding arrangements, was reactive and not strategically planned.
- had the funding to partners been proactively undertaken it might have produced earlier benefits in terms of value for money but also provided more time for the Council to work with funding recipients to potentially influence and align their provision to the needs of the youth service users.

The Council consulted widely with service users in the remodelling of its youth service but, there was a key weaknesses in how it informed people of the service change

What we looked for

- 27 We looked for evidence that the Council has:
- identified who it needs to involve in designing and delivering the step;
 - effectively involved key stakeholders in designing and delivering the step;
 - used the results of involvement to shape the development and delivery of the step; and
 - sought to learn lessons and improve its approach to involvement.
- 28 Our Examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'involvement' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁶

What we found

- 29 We identified the following strengths:
- the driver of the remodelling was budgetary pressures, which has been subject to wide consultation with citizens as part of "Her Gwynedd" budget consultation.

⁶ See Appendix 1

- the Council places great emphasis on the need to involve current service users in reshaping the youth service and successfully consulted a large number of these individuals.
- the Council opted for the remodelling option favoured by young people as communicated via the consultation exercise.
- in response to extensive consultation with service users, the newly remodelled service reflects a more long term and holistic approach e.g. youngsters said they want better access to youth workers, through online engagement and year-round, rather than at traditional youth clubs for a short weekly slot during school term time.
- the new model also sees the Council tailoring its provision for 16+ year olds and therefore reflects a more long term and targeted interaction with youngsters, and addresses the Council's concerns that the previous model mainly appealed to a narrower age range.

30 We identified the following opportunities for improvement:

- The absence of a clear message stating the intention to close all the existing youth clubs in the 'Gwynedd Youth Service for Tomorrow' video is a key weaknesses in how the Council communicated potential changes to service users and citizens.

Part Two: Council's response

- 31 Following the conclusion of our fieldwork we presented our findings to officers of the Council at a workshop in March 2019. At this workshop the Council began to consider its response to our findings and as a result of discussions at the workshop, and further reflection on our findings, the Council has developed the following actions under specific themes.

| Long-term – Opportunities | Council Action |
|---|--|
| <p>Despite responding to service users' views, the Council's approach is mostly reactive and driven by a changing operating context – specifically, financial constraints. The Council's perception of the benefits of establishing a scalable operating model is mostly centred around helping it to respond more easily to budgetary pressures.</p> | <p>The Council recognises that budgetary pressures have been part of its consideration when remodelling the Youth Service. The Council will review its arrangements for considering the requirements of the Act, in conjunction with possible savings and cuts regimes, in evaluating and reaching decisions on the remodelling / restructuring of services.</p> |
| <p>Data sources used to inform the new model mostly focused on understanding the needs of current service users with little use of data to model future demand on the service</p> | <p>The remodelling included drawing together a statistical profile of Gwynedd's 11-25 year olds. However, in drawing together the profile there were gaps in the data available (in terms of fields, 'coverage' for the full age group, and in terms of geography). When data sets / data sources are available we will ensure that they are used appropriately when modelling demand for future services. We will draw the attention of the Public Services Board to the void in data for this age group despite which we did consider them when reviewing the needs assessments.</p> |
| Prevention - Opportunities | Council Action |
| <p>The newly remodelled mobile service has greater ability to 'pop-up' as and where needed and can therefore be more dynamic in responding to social issues identified and help to prevent them escalating</p> | <p>In understanding the root causes of those problems, we will consider what part the Youth Service can play in helping to tackle them.</p> |
| <p>Increasing the effective use of data will give the Council a better understanding of the root causes of issues and demand on the service. This will help the Council to widen the scope of its thinking and have a more</p> | <p>Where data is available, we can improve the effective use of data. We will do this while continuing to cascade Ffordd Gwynedd through the corporation - the model includes the need for managers to use data effectively when identifying needs,</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>holistic approach to early intervention and prevention.</p> | <p>identifying ways of avoiding the needs arising. We will ensure that Ffordd Gwynedd training is provided to all Council managers which will contribute towards improving our use of data. The Youth Service Management Team has now completed Ffordd Gwynedd Training.</p> |
| <p>Integration- Opportunities</p> | <p>Council Action</p> |
| <p>There is little evidence to reflect that the Council has considered how the step contributes to its wider well-being objectives, those of its partners, or the seven national well-being goals. The Council lacked an integrated approach in remodelling its youth service. Despite the Council and partners' well-being objectives not being established when the remodelling began, the financially driven, reactive nature of its approach meant that wider priorities were not effectively considered.</p> | <p>The opportunity for improvement highlighted reflects the strategic / governance context that existed at the time.</p> <p>The council ensures that its services contribute to its well-being objectives through its performance challenge arrangements, annual reports and an annual review of the Council's Plan. The well-being aims and objectives of the Council Plan are aligned with the Public Services Board Well-being Plan.</p> <p>Since the implementation of the phase we have reviewed the contribution and purpose of the new Youth Service to the well-being objectives of the Council Plan as part of the annual review of that scheme.</p> <p>The Public Service Board has reviewed sub-regional governance arrangements to establish arrangements to improve integration. We will establish a Gwynedd and Anglesey Integrated Children's Group to improve integration, work with partners, and implement agreed well-being objectives for the children, young people and their families.</p> |
| <p>The Council places great emphasis on applying its 'citizen-focused' approach 'Ffordd Gwynedd' in implementing the step. However, in the step reviewed, the Council cannot demonstrate that 'Ffordd Gwynedd' fully incorporates the sustainable development principle and the five ways of working. Doing so would facilitate greater integration</p> | <p>We will commission an internal review in 2019-2020 across our services, to improve our understanding of incorporating the sustainable development principle into the implementation of Ffordd Gwynedd.</p> |
| <p>Collaboration- Opportunities</p> | <p>Council Action</p> |
| <p>Despite creating more opportunities for collaboration on an operational level, the Council cannot demonstrate its consideration of how to strategically</p> | <p>Strategic planning across the Youth Support area has been identified as a risk within the Youth Service following the de-commissioning of the Youth</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| work with partners in delivering the step. This reflects our findings in relation to integration. | Support Sub-Group of the Children and Young People's Partnership. We have reviewed our partnership / governance arrangements through the Public Services Board. We will establish a Gwynedd and Anglesey Integrated Children's Group to improve integration, work with partners, and implement agreed well-being objectives for the children, young people and their families. |
| One partner reported a negative shift in engaging with the Council's newly remodelled youth service, impacting adversely on the partners objectives and preventative activities. Again this reflects our findings in relation to integration. | We will seek to involve all stakeholders when shaping services in the future. |
| Involvement - Opportunities | Council Action |
| The absence of a clear message communicating the intention to close all the existing youth clubs in the 'Gwynedd Youth Service for Tomorrow' video is a key weaknesses in how the Council communicated potential changes to service users and citizens. | We will ensure that key messages are included in future communication messages. |

- 32 We will continue to monitor the Council's progress in implementing these actions, and the extent to which they address the issues we have identified in our findings.

Appendix 1

Positive Indicators of the Five Ways of Working

The table below sets out 'positive indicators' for each of the five ways of working that we have identified and will use to help inform our assessments of the extent to which bodies may be applying the sustainable development principle (SDP). We do not intend to use the indicators as a 'checklist'. They should be viewed as 'indicators' that will help us to form conclusions, rather than 'determinants' of the extent to which a body is acting in accordance with the SDP in taking steps to meet its wellbeing objectives.

Exhibit 1: Positive indicators of the five ways of working

| What would show a body is fully applying the long-term way of working? |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a clear understanding of what 'long-term' means in the context of the Act.• They have designed the step to deliver the well-being objective(s) and contribute to their long-term vision.• They have designed the step to deliver short or medium-term benefits, which are balanced with the impact over the long-term (within the project context).• They have designed the step based on a sophisticated understanding of current and future need and pressures, including analysis of future trends.• Consequently, there is a comprehensive understanding of current and future risks and opportunities.• Resources have been allocated to ensure long-term as well as short-term benefits are delivered.• There is a focus on delivering outcomes, with milestones/progression steps identified where outcomes will be delivered over the long-term.• They are open to new ways of doing things which could help deliver benefits over the longer term.• They value intelligence and pursue evidence-based approaches. |
| What would show a body is fully applying the preventative way of working? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The body seeks to understand the root causes of problems so that negative cycles and intergenerational challenges can be tackled.• The body sees challenges from a system-wide perspective, recognising and valuing the long-term benefits that they can deliver for people and places.• The body allocates resources to preventative action that is likely to contribute to better outcomes and use of resources over the longer-term, even where this may limit the ability to meet some short-term needs.• There are decision-making and accountability arrangements that recognise the value of preventative action and accept short-term reductions in performance and resources in the pursuit of anticipated improvements in outcomes and use of resources. |

What would show a body is taking an 'integrated' approach?

- Individuals at all levels understand their contribution to the delivery of the vision and well-being objectives.
- Individuals at all levels understand what different parts of the organisation do and proactively seek opportunities to work across organisational boundaries. This is replicated in their work with other public bodies.
- Individuals at all levels recognise the cross-organisation dependencies of achieving the ambition and objectives.
- There is an open culture where information is shared.
- There is a well-developed understanding of how the well-being objectives and steps to meet them impact on other public sector bodies.
- Individuals proactively work across organisational boundaries to maximise their contribution across the well-being goals and minimise negative impacts.
- Governance, structures and processes support this, as do behaviours.

What would show a body is collaborating effectively?

- The body is focused on place, community and outcomes rather than organisational boundaries.
- The body has a good understanding of partners' objectives and their responsibilities, which helps to drive collaborative activity.
- The body has positive and mature relationships with stakeholders, where information is shared in an open and transparent way.
- The body recognises and values the contributions that all partners can make.
- The body seeks to establish shared processes and ways of working, where appropriate.

What would show a body is involving people effectively?

- Having an understanding of who needs to be involved and why.
- Reflecting on how well the needs and challenges facing those people are currently understood.
- Working co-productively, working with stakeholders to design and deliver.
- Seeing the views of stakeholders as a vital source of information that will help deliver better outcomes.
- Ensuring that the full diversity of stakeholders is represented and they are able to take part.
- Having mature and trusting relationships with its stakeholders where there is ongoing dialogue and information is shared in an open and transparent way.
- Ensure stakeholders understand the impact of their contribution.
- Seek feedback from key stakeholders which is used to help learn and improve.

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