

# Setting of well-being objectives – Ceredigion County 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 goals.<sup>1</sup> 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 objectives.<sup>2</sup> We are carrying out a rolling programme of these examinations, up to early 2025.<sup>3</sup>
- 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 prevention.<sup>4</sup>
- 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Section 5 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

## Carrying out our examination at Ceredigion County Council

- 6 The aim of this examination was to:
  - explain how Ceredigion County Council (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 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.
- 9 We gathered our evidence in the following ways:
  - reviewing key documents;
  - running a workshop with key officers and Members who were involved with setting the well-being objectives; and
  - carrying out a final clarification meeting on outstanding issues with key individuals in addition to the above.
- 10 We also provided some informal feedback to officers on the key findings from our work prior to sharing the first draft of this report.

## How and when the Council set its well-being objectives

- 11 The Council adopted its new Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 (the Strategy) in November 2022. The Strategy has been structured around the Council’s new four Well-being Objectives (WBO), these being:
  - Boosting the Economy, Supporting Businesses and Enabling Employment
  - Creating Caring and Healthy Communities

- Providing the Best Start in Life and Enabling Learning at All Ages
  - Creating Sustainable, Green and Well-connected Communities
- 12 The Council's Strategy is also its well-being statement, which it is required to publish under the Act.' The Council has published the full Strategy on their website, as well as a Summary Strategy and an 'Easy Read' version.
- 13 In setting its new Well-being Objectives (WBO) the Council has applied lessons learned from its previous setting of WBO. These key lessons included:
- developing its new WBO and Corporate priorities to become one in the same, with the aim of ensuring that the Council is well placed to maximise its contribution to the National Goals.
  - being clearer about the rationale and evidence base for its WBO which has ensured that its WBO are focused on those areas that will make the biggest impact and address the most significant issues.
  - a focus on strengthening the links between its WBO and individual service plans. This has ensured that the way the Council delivers its services is better aligned to delivering its WBO.

## What we found

**The Council has applied the sustainable development principle in setting its well-being objectives however it could draw on more extensive citizen involvement and improve monitoring and reporting.**

## The process for setting well-being objectives

### Evidence Base

- 14 The Council drew from a wide-ranging set of data and intelligence to understand both its current and future needs. For example:
- The regional Well-being Assessment
  - Its annual review of performance against its WBO
  - Its annual self-assessment
  - West Wales Care Partnership Population needs assessment 2022
  - West Wales Care Partnership Area plan
  - The future trends report (Wales) 2021
  - Evidence for the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3): Summary for Wales 2021

- 15 This wide-ranging intelligence has helped the Council to provide a clear rationale for the setting of its WBO and the steps it is taking to deliver them.
- 16 The Council has used a robust set of evidence to develop a clear understanding of the root causes of the key issues. For example, challenges around local employment opportunities and the availability of affordable housing, being some of the root causes of the migration of young people out of the County. This understanding has then been used to determine which actions it considers will have the greatest positive impact.

## Consultation and Involvement

- 17 The Council has recognised the importance of involving citizens, including hard to reach groups, and stakeholders in setting and delivering its WBO. It has consulted on its Corporate Strategy both directly and by drawing on the results of existing engagement exercises, for example, engagement around the Public Service Board Well-being Assessment. However, the Council has recognised that responses to these consultations were limited and didn't reflect the full diversity of citizens.
- 18 There are some good examples in the Council's Corporate Strategy of where engagement is working well, and citizens are involved in the delivery of the steps to deliver the WBO. These include work with service users in the development of the Through Age Well-Being Model (TAWBM) and involving young people and Housing Associations in the Council's affordable and lifetime housing programmes.
- 19 Developing and implementing innovative and different ways to engage citizens to inform the setting of its future WBO will be important if the Council is to improve the levels of engagement and reach the full diversity of the population. The Council's recently launched Participation and Engagement Strategy should assist it with this.
- 20 The narrative within the Council's Corporate Strategy highlights that delivering on the WBO can only be successfully achieved through collaboration with citizens. For example, its WBO "Creating Caring and Healthy Communities" will be underpinned by the delivery of the TAWBM which, in turn, is predicated on early engagement with citizens and citizen families to identify needs and reduce the risk for the provision of high intensity care packages in the future.

## Planning to improve well-being

- 21 The Council has a good understanding of how its WBO support the delivery of the National Goals and undertook a specific mapping exercise to determine how its WBO, and the steps it is taking to deliver them best supported each Goal. The Council has also developed a clear correlation between the Public Service Board WBO and its own WBO and has a good understanding of shared regional issues and risks developed in part through the regional PSB well-being assessment.
- 22 When developing its WBO, the Council examined the strategic priorities of other regional organisations, including those in the Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Plan

2021-2025 and the West Wales Care Partnership (Regional Partnership Board) Area Plan, to enable and promote a joined-up approach to improving well-being in Ceredigion.

- 23 There are several examples, including the Growing Mid Wales Partnership and West Wales Care Partnership, which the Council has drawn upon to help inform the setting of its WBO and will also work with to help deliver them. There are also examples, including TAWBM, that show where and how the Council is promoting early intervention and prevention to deliver on improving well-being.
- 24 The Council's four new WBO use a narrative that helps to position them as being relevant to delivering both short term and long-term need. Areas within its Corporate Strategy where this was particularly strong included climate change and carbon reduction, in its focus on affordable housing, in its approach to economic regeneration and its TAWBM.

## **Delivering the well-being objectives**

- 25 A key part of the current process to deliver the Council's WBO is through its Service Business Plans. These form a key part of the Council's 'golden thread' interconnecting individual staff plans through to the priorities within the Corporate Strategy. The Council is continuing to improve the way in which these Service Business Plans clearly demonstrate how individual services support the delivery of the WBO.
- 26 The Council has demonstrated how it has allocated resources to support the delivery of some areas of its WBO. Examples include specific resource allocation to TAWBM and the earmarking of over £9m of reserves to underpin key Mid Wales Growth Deal projects. The Council is developing a new Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) - that is scheduled for completion by the middle of 2023 - and has developed a multi-year Capital Strategy to improve the long-term alignment of resources to the WBO. The effective development and successful implementation of the new MTFS and Capital Strategies is clearly fundamental to delivering the WBO.
- 27 The Council has recognised that the long-term resourcing for some of the WBO, such as the WBO which incorporates decarbonisation, remains a risk. It will be important that the new version of its MTFS includes an assessment of where there might be future financial risk to the delivery of its WBO.

## **Monitoring the well-being objectives**

- 28 The Council's current process for monitoring progress against its WBO is through a combination of its Quarterly Performance monitoring arrangements and through its annual reporting and self-assessment report. The Council has recognised that its current monitoring approach needs to be improved to ensure that it is able to monitor its WBO progress more effectively and on more regular basis.



- 29 Whilst the Corporate Strategy includes the activity that the Council will undertake to make progress on delivering its WBO and also includes the National Public Accountability Measures, it intends to include a more comprehensive set of measures to determine its progress within its individual Service Business Plans.
- 30 The Council also recognises that it needs to develop a greater range of high-level outcome-based measures to effectively monitor progress against its WBO. It intends to undertake work around both monitoring and measures as part of the ongoing improvements it is making to its performance management arrangements. Refining, regularly reporting and robustly scrutinising, the WBO measures will be a key step in enabling the Council to determine the progress it is making in delivering its WBO and how/whether they are impacting and improving the wellbeing of the citizens of Ceredigion as intended and planned.
- 31 There are some good examples of performance measures and steps, including those around poverty, such as “Create and implement a Rural Deprivation and Equity Action Plan to support schools, non-maintained settings and childcare and play providers to reduce the impact of poverty on all children” that consider the wide impact on wellbeing across the Council’s services.

## Recommendations

- R1 The Council should build on the progress it has made in applying the sustainable development principle in the setting of its well-being objectives by:
- exploring new ways of drawing on the full diversity of its population to inform and deliver its WBO.
  - ensuring that its refreshed MTFS shows how it will resource the delivery of its new WBO over the short, medium and longer term and to reflect any potential future financial risks to deliver them.
  - ensuring its evolving performance management arrangements identify the most appropriate outcome measures and provide effective monitoring, reporting and scrutiny of the progress being made on delivering its WBO.

# 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. It also includes some 'positive indicators' that have been tailored to this examination, adapted from those we have previously used to inform our sustainable development principle examinations. This list is not a checklist, but rather an illustrative set of characteristics that describe what good could look like.

<b>To what extent has the body acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting its new well-being objectives?</b>	
<b>Planning: Was the process the body put in place to set its well-being objectives underpinned by the sustainable development principle?</b>	
<b>Has the body used data and other intelligence to understand need, risks and opportunities and how they might change over time?</b>	<b>Positive indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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.</li><li>• 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"><li>– Public Services Boards' well-being assessments</li><li>– Regional Partnership Boards' population assessments</li><li>– The results of local involvement/ consultation exercises</li><li>– Service monitoring and complaints</li><li>– Future Trends report</li></ul></li></ul>

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Natural Resources Wales’ State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) for Wales and Area Based Assessments</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Has the body involved others in developing its well-being objectives?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Involvement reflects good practice and advice from the Future Generations Commissioner.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Has the body considered how the objectives can improve well-being and have a broad impact?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• The well-being objectives have been designed to reflect and capitalise on the connections between different areas of work.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Has the body designed the objectives to deliver longer-term benefits, balanced with meeting short-term needs?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The body has set objectives that are sufficiently ambitious and have been designed to drive activity across the organisation.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>

**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?**

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

<p><b>Has the body considered how it can resource the well-being objectives?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• The body has allocated resources to deliver preventative benefits, where these are described in its well-being objectives.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Has the body considered how it can work with others to deliver their objectives?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>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?</b></p>	
<p><b>Has the body developed appropriate measures and monitoring arrangements?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance measures are designed to reflect the sustainable development principle, e.g., by focusing on outcomes that cut across departmental/ organisational boundaries and deliver multiple (including preventative) benefits over the longer term.</li> <li>• There is a 'golden thread' that will allow the body to clearly and transparently report on progress to meeting the objectives.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Is the body seeking to learn from and improve how it has applied the sustainable development principle to setting its well-being objectives?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• The body has or plans to reflect on how it has applied the sustainable development principle in this round of setting well-being objectives.</li> </ul>





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