

Well-being Objective Setting Examination – Cardiff 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.¹ 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.² We are carrying out a rolling programme of these examinations, up to early 2025.³
- 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.⁴
- 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 Cardiff 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 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 delivered this examination in March 2023.
- 9 We gathered our evidence in the following ways:
 - reviewing key documents;
 - meeting observations;
 - running two workshops with key officers involved with setting the well-being objectives; and
 - carrying out a small number of interviews.

How and when Cardiff Council set its well-being objectives

- 10 The Council and Cardiff Public Services Board (PSB) adopted shared well-being objectives. The Council commenced work on setting the steps to support the well-being objectives during 2022. The Council published its well-being objectives and supporting steps in March 2023. **Exhibit 1** sets out those well-being objectives.
- 11 The Council published its well-being objectives as part of its Corporate Plan 2023-2026 and the Corporate Plan 2023-26 can be viewed on Cardiff Council’s [website](#).
- 12 Under the Act, public bodies must have a well-being statement. This does not need to be a separate document and can be included within a public body’s corporate plan (or equivalent). Cardiff Council’s Corporate Plan 2023-26 also acts as the Council’s wellbeing statement and while the Council includes many of the legislative requirements pertaining to a wellbeing statement within its Corporate

Plan, there are elements not covered. These are: how the Council intends to govern itself and its progress towards achieving its well-being objectives and it does not set out how the wellbeing objectives will help meet the national wellbeing goals.

Exhibit 1: Cardiff Council well-being objectives 2023-26

Cardiff is a Great Place to Grow Up
Cardiff is a Great Place to Grow Older
Supporting People out of Poverty
Safe, Confident and Empowered Communities
A Capital City that Works for Wales
One Planet Cardiff
Modernising and Integrating our Public Services

What we found

The Council has used the sustainable development principle to drive the setting of its well-being objectives including good use of data and a strong collaborative approach

Findings

- 13 The Council and PSB shared well-being objectives demonstrate a sense of collective ownership and partnership approach to deliver the benefits for the city. Partners need to collaborate to successfully deliver the objectives.
- 14 The well-being objectives are designed to improve Cardiff in the longer term. The Council has set out steps that focus on the short and long term to help deliver the well-being objectives.

- 15 The Council's use of data to understand current needs, future trends and risks is a strength. The Council has used an extensive range of data to support the setting of wellbeing objectives and the steps.
- 16 The Council has made considerable effort to engage the public and involve the diversity of the population and is continuing to strengthen its arrangements. By reviewing the citizen responses following its public engagement, the Council is aware there are five groups of the population that are not engaging to the same extent as other population groups. The Council is putting in place plans to encourage greater engagement with these groups.
- 17 We found that the Council adopted a strong cross organisational and collaborative approach to determine the steps and actions it will take to help deliver the well-being objectives. Having learnt from setting previous wellbeing objectives, the Council has strengthened links between the directorates and the corporate policy team. They now meet regularly to discuss the well-being objectives and steps. The directorates value the support provided by the corporate policy team. There are clear expectations and channels of communication.
- 18 We observed good use of internal challenge sessions with officers and Cabinet members to explore each wellbeing objective in detail. Scrutiny committee chairs have also played an active role in scrutinising and developing the Corporate Plan.
- 19 In terms of arrangements to support the delivery of the well-being objectives in the short to medium term, the Council has identified capital expenditure and additional revenue for projects, programmes and initiatives. This includes investment in areas intended to have a preventative benefit, such as shifting the balance of care in Children's Services and Independent Living in Adults Service.
- 20 The Council hasn't determined resources to support delivery over the longer term, but it has set out the key challenges and considerations in its medium-term financial plan 2024-25 to 2027-28. Given the wider financial challenges and the long-term nature of the objectives, it will be important for the Council to determine the resources needed to support the well-being objectives over the longer term. Without this, there is a risk that the well-being objectives will not be fully achieved.
- 21 The Council has also developed Directorate Delivery Plans to support the delivery of its Corporate Plan and well-being objectives. The Council intends to strengthen these plans for 2023-24. Each service will be required to include key sources of citizen intelligence to demonstrate how involvement and engagement with service users and the wider public are influencing directorate actions and priorities.
- 22 The well-being objectives reflect the collective ambitions of public services in Cardiff. In terms of monitoring arrangements, the Council and the PSB use the same outcome indicators to measure progress towards achieving the objectives. There is a live city-wide performance dashboard which can be continuously updated by partners with their performance. Thereby, enabling partners to monitor their collective progress. The Council has also supplemented these measures with Council specific ones supporting each step and well-being Objective. The internal

challenge sessions gave robust challenge to the validity and robustness of the performance indicators.

- 23 The Council has robust arrangements for monitoring its Corporate Plan and well-being objectives throughout the year. These include its mid-year and annual self-assessment alongside regular progress reports to Cabinet, senior managers and scrutiny committees. These provide regular opportunities to understand progress, identify issues and discuss remedial actions where necessary.
- 24 Overall, it was evident that the Council has learnt from setting its previous well-being objectives. It had identified areas where it could further strengthen its arrangements and is taking action to address these. This includes improving how it involves a greater diversity of the population and strengthening its directorate delivery plans.

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.

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?	
	Positive indicators

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

<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 Council 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 Council 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 Council 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 Council involved others in developing its well-being objectives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council 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.

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

Has the Council considered how the objectives can improve well-being and have a broad impact?

- 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.

Has the Council designed the objectives to deliver longer-term benefits, balanced with meeting short-term needs?

- The Council 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.

Resourcing and delivery: 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 considered how it can resource the well-being objectives?

- Resources have been allocated to ensure the objectives can be delivered over the short and medium-term, but the Council has also considered longer-term resources, risks and/or how it can resource longer-term objectives.

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">• The Council has allocated resources to deliver preventative benefits, where these are described in its well-being objectives.
Has the Council considered how it can work with others to deliver their objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Council is drawing on its knowledge of partners objectives/ activity, its relationships and collaborative arrangements to make sure it can deliver on cross-cutting ambitions.
Monitor and review: 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?	
Has the Council developed appropriate measures and monitoring arrangements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.• There is a 'golden thread' that will allow the Council to clearly and transparently report on progress to meeting the objectives.
Is the Council seeking to learn from and improve how it has applied the sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Council 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.

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

development principle to setting its well-being objectives?

- The Council 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 Council 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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