

Monday 10th April 2017

Dear Neath Port Talbot Public Services Boards members and support team,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide feedback on your draft Assessment of Local Well-being sent to the office in March 2017.

The first thing I want to do is to make it clear that I fully appreciate the challenges that you have faced in the development of the assessment this time around, and I congratulate your team on their hard work and efforts.

My primary focus in providing this feedback is to help you consider how well your work so far will help you to set your collective objectives and undertake well-being planning. For me Public Services Boards are one of the biggest opportunities for the public sector in Wales to change the way we do things in Wales and to collaboratively make decisions and deliver services that will benefit future generations.

Your assessment is a key part of this, and whilst I appreciate that it may not be a full picture by the time you publish it, it is important that it sets out a clear and informed picture of the well-being of Neath Port Talbot and your communities, that is relevant now and into the future. **Your assessment should enable you to clearly identify key challenges for your area and communities, and to develop collective objectives that address these challenges.**

I attach a document that gives you detailed feedback on your draft assessment, and what you should think about building on both in the short term as you move towards well-being planning and in terms of assessing well-being in the future.

During 2017-18 one of your key tasks will be to develop your collective well-being objectives as part of your Well-being Plan. The legislation requires you to seek my advice on how to take steps to meet your objectives in accordance with the sustainable development principle (five ways of working).

Below I set out some of the things I will be looking for as my office continues to work with you. In my view those PSBs who have showed they are already taking account of the five ways of working will be well placed to develop objectives and Well-being Plans, which will have benefits for all organisations involved in terms of maximising their collective contribution to the goals and addressing inter-generational challenges.

I wanted to start off by commending the effort you have clearly put into structuring your assessment in an innovative and engaging format, designed around internet accessibility. Reading through your assessment online it is great to see how you have integrated qualitative information from your engagement, and this helps make your assessment feel lively and relevant.

I was pleased to see that you have made a good start with your approach to **involving people and communities** in the development of your assessment, and to see the positive way qualitative data has been used to illustrate each thematic document and the eight area profiles. I would encourage you to make sure that you continue to provide opportunities for a broad range of stakeholders and citizens to get involved in influencing the development of your objectives, and be able to demonstrate that their input has an effect on what you do.

You have made a good start at thinking about **integration** between issues and themes, and there are some strong examples of where authors have considered a topic within a broader narrative, enabling them to explore the inter-relationships between other topics or well-being determinants – of particular note are the sections on natural heritage and biodiversity. It is also helpful to see how you have addressed the national well-being goals at the start of your four thematic documents, with a description of which goals are relevant. This gives you a good basis for considering the relative roles of your different organisations in **maximising your contribution** to the goals, as part of well-being planning.

There are some good examples in your assessment of where **long term** data has been used around flooding, ageing population, housing, economic change and climate change and your 'future trends' sections give you a good structure to build upon. It would be helpful for you to give more general consideration to the long term, particularly through thinking through the longer term implications of issues to well-being in Neath Port Talbot.

A key element of the legislation is the focus on **preventing problems** from occurring rather than just responding to them. This is an area where I would encourage you to give detailed consideration to what the data and evidence is telling you, in order to make sense of key challenges you have identified.

And **collaboration** is key to all of this – you now have the opportunity to take your partnership working to a new level, collaborating with resources and finding new ways to deal with old problems. Your assessment should be helping you to identify the most fruitful opportunities to do this.

Your support team have worked hard to develop this assessment and the people who support your well-being planning will need your full buy-in and support. Key features of this are likely to be the leadership you show and your willingness to give people space and permission to explore new ways of addressing old problems. This cultural change is what the Well-being of Future Generations Act is all about.



Comisiynydd
**Cenedlaethau'r
Dyfodol**
Cymru

**Future
Generations**
Commissioner
for Wales

In anticipation of the requirement for me to provide advice on how you should take steps to meet your collective objectives I would like to see further detail of how you will use your assessment as you move towards well-being planning. I would appreciate you letting my office know how you have responded to our feedback. With this in mind it will also be important for you to provide my feedback to the scrutiny committee that has the lead for scrutinising the work of the PSB. The need for a more constructive approach to scrutiny has been identified as an important part of maximising collective action at the local level.

I hope that our feedback is clear and useful at this stage. However, I must reiterate that I don't see the development of your assessment as a one-off event. Going forward I will be providing opportunities for PSBs to share learning and best practice which I hope you will be involved in, in order to provide the best platform for you to fulfil your ongoing obligations under the Act.

Kind regards,

Sophie Howe,
Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

Feedback from the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner on

NEATH PORT TALBOT Public Services Board Draft Local Assessment of Well-being

1. Introduction

The following report provides feedback to Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board from the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner on the *Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board - Well-Being Assessment*, published for consultation in March 2017. This feedback is based on our project team¹ reviewing the following key documents and discussions:

- Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board: Well-being Assessment. Economy; Social, Environment, Cultural, March 2017
- Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board: Port Talbot; Swansea Valley; Dulais Valley; Amman Valley; Pontardawe; Afan Valley, Neath; Neath Valley, March 2017
- a phone discussion between the project team and members of the PSB team on 7th April and review of the PSB web pages.

It is intended that his feedback should be used to inform both the publication of the assessment in spring 2017 where possible and recognising the timescales that exist, but it is more important that it informs ongoing processes of developing your assessment and well-being planning.

The assessment has been reviewed by the project team using a set of criteria, developed specifically to focus on aspects of assessment production, methodology and analysis and the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. These criteria enable us to review the wide range of approaches to local assessment of well-being that have been used across Wales. This has also enabled us to provide bespoke feedback to PSBs, highlighting strengths and potential areas for improvement. This consistent approach will also enable the office to identify key issues and highlight opportunities for shared learning, at a Wales-wide level, for the wide range of public sector and other bodies involved in well-being planning.

While we understand that the assessment of well-being is an ongoing process, and that further work will be undertaken in coming months, it is important that the following comments are noted and acted upon as the well-being assessment is developed, adapted and built upon to inform well-being planning across the PSB.

¹ Dr. Alan Netherwood, Netherwood Sustainable Futures, Dr. Andrew Flynn, Cardiff University and Dr. Mark Lang, Mark Lang Consulting

2. National well-being goals

One of the issues we have considered is how effectively the seven national well-being goals have been reflected in the assessment as the WFG Act requires PSBs to demonstrate how they plan to maximise their contribution to the goals. It is important that there is a clear link between the data in assessments, its interpretation and our understanding of all aspects of well-being in our communities. We understand that PSBs will develop different ways of reflecting well-being; in Neath Port Talbot's case through four well-being themes: economic, cultural, social and environmental and a wide range of 'topics' under each theme.

We note that the PSB aspires to provide an overview of "*strengths and assets of people and communities*" and "*challenges and opportunities Neath Port Talbot faces now and in the future*". Our comments in this feedback will reflect on the extent to which the assessment achieves this. We understand from the phone conversation that these topics were identified within the partnership, and that there was some debate about how these illustrated the four well-being themes. It would be useful for the assessment to explain why this approach has been taken and to provide some context for their selection as *the* key issues for communities across the area, in preference to others.

In terms of the national goals, it is good to see that these have been addressed at the beginning of each of the four themed sections, with a description of which goals are relevant. You could build on this by clearly explaining *why* particular goals are relevant to the content of the section. This may address linkages between the section content which are currently missing – for example:

- economic well-being – where resilience and cohesion are clearly relevant to the data
- cultural well-being – where resilience could be reflected as a result of the strong natural heritage section
- environmental well-being – where the global goal is clearly relevant to the content on biodiversity and climate change.

We believe building on the existing approach is important, especially for the PSB to understand how it can *maximise* its contribution to the seven national well-being goals. What is this telling us about the contribution of these topics to the goals? How could the PSB make the greatest contribution in the areas identified? Which are the areas of PSB activity where there needs to be an improvement in contribution? Where are the opportunities to deliver multiple goals by addressing key issues? Are there any goals which the PSB don't contribute to through the 'topics' identified and need to understand how they *could* contribute (e.g. the global goal?)

We understand the rationale behind your section on integration – and see some good examples of integrated thinking. We believe focusing on the goals could provide you with a useful frame to understand and explore the critical interconnections between the wide range of topics you have identified in the assessment (this is explored further in point 8 on *Integration* below)

3. Data content – area and place

The WFG Act requires well-being assessments to focus on the area and ‘place’ and reflect the variety of communities across your area. We have considered the extent to which the data content of your assessment does this. We understand from the phone conversation that a great deal of thought has gone into selecting the eight areas chosen, informed by the Local Development Plan process, and to resonate with wards within Neath Port Talbot.

We understand from the conversation, the difficulty in developing a local picture of well-being from a quantitative perspective, and that work is currently underway to develop the eight area ‘profiles’. There is scope for improvement, especially in sections on economy, culture and social well-being, to provide greater understanding of differences within areas or between areas, inequalities and particularly acute local issues.

The environment theme provides a benchmark for the other thematic sections in the assessment, by providing excellent local data, qualitative data, interpretation and narrative to understand the local context within Neath Port Talbot – for example in terms of forest and wild fires.

It is good that some LSOA and MSOA data has been used in the thematic documents (especially poverty) providing a clear insight at a place based level. However, building a better picture of economic, social and cultural well-being for topics selected could be addressed by simply asking the question “*are there any significant and specific locality differences?*” against each and asking authors or contributors to consider this question, as well as listing data sources and gaps.

Generally, there needs to be a better *explanation* of the spatial differences across the diversity of communities in the area. Why is there such a gap in life expectancy between different parts of the area, what are the determinants? Are there differences in the viability of town centres across Neath Port Talbot based on business start-ups? Are unhealthy lifestyles and obesity problems across the area or are they more prevalent in particular communities? Where is the voluntary sector most active and what does it do?

We believe that this is indicative of a more general need for interpretation of the data presented, as often data is left to stand on its own and would benefit from greater explanation and contextualisation –

including the sufficiency of current interventions. Is the current level of flood risk management in Port Talbot sufficient to cope with climate impacts, are the interventions aimed at tackling areas where 64% of household are deprived sufficient? Will flooding impact on insurance, economic development and environmental quality in particular areas?

The assessment could be further improved by including data on critical energy, water, transport and coastal protection infrastructure. This means not just a description, but an interpretation of key challenges and trade-offs (see later comments in point 6). This type of information is of key relevance to the PSB, service delivery and future community well-being.

Overall, we would hope to see your assessment develop to set out a more qualitative picture and an understanding of the assets and challenges of particular communities across Neath Port Talbot as part of your well-being planning process

4. Data content – public service needs

We think it is important that you have a clear picture of the different needs of people and communities now and in the future, and that the implications of these needs are understood. We have considered the extent to which the data content of the assessment focuses on public service needs, within communities and for particular groups of individuals.

A priority for the office is encouraging public bodies and PSBs to make sure that they are firstly involving people and communities in ways that give them greater insights into people's lived experiences of public bodies, and secondly acting upon these insights when they make decisions and deliver services. It is clear that the population needs assessment has been part of your approach and we reflect later on that in point 8 of this feedback

Generally there appears to be limited analysis of implications of the current (or potential) situation to public service needs either Neath Port Talbot wide or within communities. As stated previously, under many topics there is limited interpretation of the data to enable us to understand the sufficiency, pressure and need to adapt public services to meet community needs. As well as a description of the current situation on poverty, social services and flooding for example, what challenges do these issues pose for the public sector over the short, medium to long term? What are the service, financial and spatial challenges, and how might they change over time in the Neath Port Talbot context?

Future versions of the assessment should address this issue in order to inform the PSB about where collective action would make the most significant impact.

We understand from the phone conversation that the consultation did provide some insight into needs in localities from citizens, and there is clearly a lot of evidence here which could be brought together in a broader summary on the significant gaps in public service delivery and the challenges to services over the short, medium and long term. This is addressed further in point 6 on Challenges below.

5. Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

We recognise the challenge of balancing data, insights and evidence to produce a rounded understanding of well-being of communities and individuals of the short, medium and long term. One of our main considerations has been the extent to which both quantitative and qualitative analysis and methods in assessments provide a broad picture of environmental, economic, cultural and social well-being, together with initial commentary on the implications of this 'picture' for communities. i.e. what really matters?

Generally, as stated, there is variability in how well each topic sets out the strategic context for the 'measures it uses, and in the quality of interpretation of the quantitative data under each topic. There is a need for greater consistency throughout the documents to explain why an issue is particularly important for Neath Port Talbot, the potential implications for community well-being, whether the current situation is being managed effectively, and the implication of this situation to public services. Often quantitative data is described rather than interpreted. However, qualitative data from the consultation is generally used well to illustrate what people think is important about the different aspects of well-being.

The following paragraphs provide more specific feedback under each well-being theme feedback on Future Trends sections are included later in this document:²

Environmental: there is a clear link between the five sub themes: water; air; land; biodiversity; climate and the national well-being goals, but there should be a clearer reference to the global goal too. This section provides a good historical context, excellent local and area-wide interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data. Its approach with a sub-heading "Why is this important?" is commendable and should be used in other themed sections of the assessment. For some of these issues it could be made clearer what the well-being implications *are* – for example:

- low *water* flows [on agriculture and economy?] *air* quality [on respiratory conditions?]
- the *land* section is another example of this – where there is much made of wildfire management – but less on the potential impacts on health from access to green space and the outdoors –

² feedback on Future Trends sections are included later in this document in section

what are the well-being impacts and potential to improve well-being from greater access to the environment?

- for *biodiversity* – the assets are clear, but there needs to clearer understanding of which pressures are particularly significant in Neath Port Talbot – where are the pressures and are we currently doing enough?
- for *climate change* – this could be improved by interpreting national impacts from the CCRA for the local area – what is the likely impact of increased riverine and coastal flooding given current investment in flood risk management? Similarly for renewable energy – what is the potential for renewable energy generation?

Economic: there is a clear link to the prosperous well-being goal - but not others – which are relevant to the data used in the section, including resilience [green economy], global [investment and jobs], cohesion [transport]. The data is focused on income; employment; education and skills; infrastructure and technology; tourism. On the whole there could be greater strategic context or interpretation within this section. for example:

- data on *income*, where the text describes the data in the table but not what it tells and fuel poverty provides one fact with no context at all;
- *employment*: there is a statement on regeneration that needs to provide more context and explanation - why hasn't regeneration worked? What is vibrant and viable places aiming to do to town centres?
- the *retail* detail is good - but how viable are town centres?
- *education* - "there is a link between qualifications, employment and income and economic well-being" - what is it? How does this manifest itself in Neath Port Talbot?
- *infrastructure and technology* - what are the transport, infrastructural, asset and broadband needs of NPT?
- *land development opportunities* – clearly these are an asset – but greater context is needed to explain their inclusion
- *mental stress* – this is an interesting finding from the consultation than deserves more interpretation to link to social well-being and demand on health and social services.

This section would benefit from more clarity about what aspects of the economy are strong and fragile, and what the interventions listed aim to do. This is a data and indicator focused narrative providing a limited picture of the local economy, and would benefit from more consideration of the role of: the non-monetary economy. the economic *assets* from an ageing population; the inter-relationships of the area's economy with other local economies including both Swansea Bay and Cardiff City Deals (beyond broad aspirations of jobs and infrastructure); and an understanding of the impact on well-being of patterns of commuting.

In addition, while we understand that Brexit provides great uncertainty, the potential implications of Brexit, for example on regeneration funding, is a key issue which will impact across well-being themes. Some reflection on likely impacts on Neath Port Talbot's citizens should be included in the assessment as the PSB progress well-being planning. What parts of the economy are likely to suffer if current funding commitments aren't met? We would also be interested to understand the extent (or potential) of private sector involvement to develop our understanding of local economic well-being.

Cultural: data on arts and heritage; welsh language; sports and physical activity; volunteering; community; religion is provided, which are linked to equality, cohesion and culture national goals. This should include the resilient goal too given the strong emphasis on natural heritage and biodiversity. There is a wide range of quality of data and interpretation in this section:

- for *arts and heritage*: the section on Pontardawe Arts centre is excellent and provides a benchmark for narrative on cultural assets, providing a clear interpretation of its benefit to the community – whereas numbers of visitors and lists of assets elsewhere in the document provide little insight
- similarly for *sports and physical activity* the data shows use of Council facilities but provides little understanding of the major role of sports clubs in communities across the area
- for *volunteering* there is really good info on volunteering and role of what they do, but it could be improve by more information on, spatial and generational variation. Does this represent poor levels of volunteering or potential which could be built upon?
- for *religion, older people and young people* - it is unclear why religion has been included as part of a broader discussion on young and old people.

Again, focusing on particular measures provides a limited focus on culture in the area. Despite some references in the eight area profiles, there is very little in the document on the cultural *capital* of Neath Port Talbot and this something that should be addressed in future work on the Assessment. This section could be far more *descriptive* of the vibrancy of the areas' culture around the arts, language, social networks, cultural activities, local food and drink, events, information networks and the contribution of its volunteering in particular communities. What is the current and potential cultural impact of social media on its communities? How do town centres contribute to cultural well-being across the areas?

Social: the focus on healthy lifestyle; safety; social care; housing and 19 sub 'measures' provides a wide range of data, which like other sections is varied in its interpretation and context, and could be improved – for example:

- a better interpretation of spatial differences: for example *life expectancy* – why is there such a disparity between different parts of the area. Is the *food access* issue identified in the Afan valley significant and symptomatic of a wider problem?
- a better interpretation of significance: for example on *chronic conditions* – is this situation critical, improving – are current interventions working?
- a better understanding of impact of interventions - are we doing enough soon enough for example on *mental health*?
- clearer links between the data and the scale of the issue for the PSB to tackle – for example – there is more data and discussion on childhood vaccinations than 30% of children living in poverty
- more localised interpretation e.g. healthy behaviours, obesity, physical activity -clear on importance - but what does this tell us about WB in NPT?

For some sections the data is listed as a set of statistics with little interpretation of how meaningful or significant they are in the area or within particular communities. (e.g. *community, transport, digital safety*). The exception is *housing* - which has a preamble which does set some context but still needs more interpretation.

We would expect to see a greater degree of consistency in the provision and use of both quantitative and qualitative data in all of the above areas as well-being planning progresses in Neath Port Talbot.

6. Key challenges

It is important that well-being assessments, in assessing the state of well-being, focus on key challenges to well-being over the short, medium and long term, as well as the positive attributes and assets in the area. This includes the trade-offs between different well-being goals, tensions, assets and deficits within the area.

Clearly there a number of strategic challenges which provide a backdrop to your assessment which perhaps need to be considered within a broader commentary at the beginning of the document? These challenges are common to all areas within Wales, but have little profile in many parts of the documents as they stand– perhaps due to the lack of interpretation: At present we only get a very limited understanding of how the following issues are impacting on well-being in Neath Port Talbot: inequalities in health and standard of living, infrastructural resilience, accommodating population change; limited resources for social care; under-provision of housing; people living in poverty; welfare reform; climate impacts; austerity; natural resource depletion, economic change.

This is an area where existing data and information might help to provide a broad strategic context for the work of the PSB. While these challenges are sometimes picked up within the text, it would be helpful to have a broader and integrated understanding of how they inter-relate and how they might impact on Neath Port Talbot over the medium and long term. For example – there are clear trade-offs between environmental quality, health, health services, the steel industry and transport infrastructure which are key determinants of well-being in Neath Port Talbot which need to be better reflected at a strategic level in the assessment – similarly the high levels of poverty among children and in particular communities across the area.

We believe the approach taken in the Environment thematic section could be followed by the others to provide a broader, more strategic understanding of well-being challenges which the data could support, rather than the data limiting the 'frame' of well-being.

We also believe that the assessment could be developed to focus more clearly on the economic, social, cultural and environmental *assets* of the area, and what these assets provide for community well-being. Clearly the well-being benefits of Pontardawe Arts Centre have been clearly described, but what other assets contribute to well-being in Neath Port Talbot?

- economic assets from an ageing population, in terms of skills, volunteering, retirement spend.
- the strength of the community sector in supporting social well-being -, the nature of social networks, the social fabric of towns and towns and villages
- the role of the non-monetary economy in social well-being, physical assets, food banks, community asset transfer etc.) and levels (and strength) of unpaid care.
- the vibrancy of culture around the arts, language, social networks, cultural activities, local food and drink, agricultural shows, information networks and volunteering.
- what is the potential contribution of the land assets listed in the economy section provide in addition to employment?

There is also scope for improvement (as stated in point 3) by providing a greater understanding of how challenges manifest themselves in different areas of Neath Port Talbot and which particular areas have resilience or are vulnerable to current and future trends.

7. Engagement, involvement and collaboration

The WFG Act clearly indicates that collaboration and involvement are two of the five ways of working which PSBs need to consistently apply to their work. As a consequence, we have been particularly interested in the level and method of engagement, involvement and collaboration across the

partnership in producing the assessment, including engagement with communities, public, third sector and private sector organisations.

We understand from the phone conversation that a separate report is being produced on the consultation. We would encourage you to make this available online and we would like to receive a copy. It was useful to get a better understanding of the consultation process as part of our conversation, and to see from the documents the positive way data has been used to illustrate each thematic document and the eight area profiles. The use of word clouds is particularly effective in communicating the wide interpretation of what well-being means to your citizens

We would encourage you to more clearly describe the method and range of the consultation within the assessment itself to orientate readers on how consultations have contributed to the content. Similarly, it would be good for the assessment to acknowledge the contribution of different partners and the methodology used, perhaps in an Appendix. It would be particularly interesting to understand the role and contribution of both the voluntary and private sectors to your understanding of well-being in the area, and we would encourage you to engage with these sectors as part of the well-being plan process

It is also clear from our discussion that there has been some learning within the partnership regarding running the consultations for both the well-being assessment and population assessment together in particular localities – and that there may be a benefit in running these separately in the future.

It is positive to hear how much this assessment has acted as a catalyst to develop collaborative working across the PSB. It is clear that there has been a strong contribution from key partners in terms of data provision for the assessment. We would encourage further collaborative effort in coming months to address the issues highlighted in this feedback as well-being planning progresses in the area.

8. Integration

One of the key aims of the WFG Act is to develop integration at all levels across the public sector. We believe it is important to understand the inter-relationship between environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being. As a result we have been keen to consider the level of integration between traditional policy and organisational silos in producing the assessment.

We note the section on integration on page 8 of the assessment and it is clear that you acknowledge the need to improve your approach. We believe that there are some excellent examples of where authors/contributors have considered the 'topic' within a broader narrative, enabling them to explore the inter-relationships between other 'topics' or well-being determinants – of particular note are sections on natural heritage and biodiversity. It is also positive to hear the strong influence of the Local

Development Plan on the Area 'selection' and it is clear that LDP data has informed the four thematic sections of the assessment.

However in many 'topics', there is less evidence that data from each section (and within each section) has been considered alongside that of the others, or that the inter-relationships have been considered.

On this basis, there is scope for greater integration and more exploration of the relationship of policy/challenges between each theme – for example income and mental health, economic development and flood risk, new technologies and community cohesion, environmental assets and health and well-being.

These inter-relationships should be explored and acknowledged as part of a wider effort to interpret the data gathered so far. This is something for the PSB to consider as an important issue as it develops its Well-being Plan.

9. Foresight and future trends

One of the key challenges from the legislation is to consider the short, medium *and long term* well-being throughout the assessment and Plan process. We are interested in the level of foresight and use of future trends analysis in producing the assessment and recognition of the well-being of future generations. It was positive to hear the considered way in which you have addressed this issue utilising available material at a Wales level, through the LDP work and including a future trends section under each of the four themes.

There are some good examples in the assessment where long term data has been used around flooding, ageing population, housing, economic change and climate change. The level of analysis in the future trends sections is variable, but this is a useful frame to build upon. Authors of the *future trends* sections should be encouraged to interpret the data to provide a clearer message on the longer term implications of the 'issue' to well-being in Neath Port Talbot for example by including a prompt "*so the implications for the area are.....*" An example is the potential of 33% of the population to be lone living by 2035. What are the potential well-being implications of this and the pressures/opportunities for public services as a result? There is some excellent work in these sections which needs to be built upon as part of the well-being plan process.

We would also encourage you to identify gaps in your understanding of long term trends (see comments in point 11) and also develop some insight into which communities are particularly vulnerable/resilient in the long term and why– through your eight area profiles.

The Welsh Government will be producing their Future Trends Report in May 2017. The current plan is to include 6 key themes: Population, Economy, Natural Resources & Climate Change, Health, Land Use & Infrastructure & Societal Change. As it develops your assessment will need to take account of data included in this, but should aim to provide a clearer emphasis on long term challenges to well-being in the initial assessment published in the coming months.

10. Cross boundary issues

Integration and collaboration are central to public bodies applying the sustainable development principle to their activities. One of our aims has been to review the extent to which the assessment has considered cross boundary issues for regional and national action.

This is something that we discussed in the phone conversation and we believe that a more detailed synthesis of key regional and cross border issues which affect Neath Port Talbot would be beneficial, to inform the well-being plan process. The assessment could provide a clearer explanation of the areas' role and relationship with its neighbouring authorities, and within the region in terms of social care provision, landscape management, flood risk management, biodiversity housing and infrastructural resilience in terms of water, transport, energy and waste infrastructure.

Although there is reference to both the Cardiff and Swansea Bay City Region projects it is unclear what the implications of these major, long term investments might be for *all* aspects of community well-being across Neath Port Talbot. Even if the specific impacts are uncertain at present, it will clearly have an influence on cohesion, access to services, transport equality, resilience and so on. This was acknowledged in our conversation with you.

Greater insight could also be provided on the significance of commuting patterns to well-being in Neath Port Talbot, critical issues for transport infrastructure and the nature of inter-relationships with neighbouring authorities and other regional partners. It will also be important for PSBs to consider the conclusions of neighbouring local assessments of well-being as plan production develops.

This regional focus is something we would expect to feature in future iterations of the assessment to inform well-being planning in Neath Port Talbot, perhaps forming part of the broader context for assessing well-being as suggested in previous sections of this feedback.

We noted from our conversation the importance of the assessment informing the work of the different regional partnerships, including the Regional Leadership Board and in turn feeding new information from this regional activity back into the assessment. Clearly, the PSB has a major role in facilitating information and planning at these different levels of governance.

11. Data quality and data gaps

The WFG Act intends that well-being planning will be a continuous process where the evidence base will be gradually improved over time, to enable public bodies and others to understand and plan for well-being in their communities. We are keen to understand the approach of PSBs to data quality and data gaps during the assessment and data issues moving forward.

This is an area where there is scope for the assessment process in Neath Port Talbot to improve, as at present there are few indications of data gaps, nor is there a reflection on data quality.

We would encourage you to develop a broader understanding of data gaps and to summarise these for your topics, perhaps focusing on

- what we need to know over the short term for the assessment
- what we need to develop our understanding of well-being as a PSB

An overall analysis of this type will also be important to understand if there are any patterns in data needs from across the topics, and how these gaps can be best addressed. This would be beneficial for the PSB to understand how it might improve its understanding and where resources may be needed.

This would enable the PSB to build on existing work and plan for improving data quality during the next year and beyond, helping PSB partners to build in data research and management into their business and corporate planning. It would also provide an indication to Welsh Government, the Office and Data Unit Wales on PSB needs.

12. Use of the sustainable development principle

The statutory guidance places a responsibility on PSBs to *maximise* their contribution to the well-being goals by utilising the sustainable development principle in the way that they operate. We have been keen to understand how the sustainable development principle and five ways of working have been utilised during well-being assessments.

There are activities which demonstrate the sustainable development principle:

Long term – through the use of long term data under the four themes

Involvement – through the consultation work undertaken

Collaboration – through the PSB project team and the stakeholder engagement

Prevention – through the discussion of early intervention especially in terms of early year's development

However, there is little evidence that the sustainable development principle has been applied as a *modus operandi* to this assessment. It is important for the PSB to utilise this principle to influence your choice of well-being objectives in the well-being plan and to demonstrate that in choosing those objectives:

- that preventative measures have been considered
- that collaborative approaches have been explored
- that the right individuals and bodies have been involved
- that an integrated approach has been adopted
- that the long term impacts on communities have been considered

This is an area where we would expect to see the assessment process improve between now and plan production.

13. Looking forward to plan production

A critical issue for our review of this assessment was whether the documentation was clear about how the work would be carried forward to develop local objectives and plan production.

This is another area where we believe the assessment needs to improve. Both the document and associated web based material need to be more explicit about: the next steps; how individuals and organisations can remain involved; the timetable; and what the Plan is intending to do, and how the material collected in the assessment is going to be used to formulate objectives for the PSB.

Importantly, this explanation on the website needs to communicate more clearly that the assessment is intended to help the PSB as evidence to develop a plan with well-being objectives for collective action. A clear explanation is also needed in the assessment document itself.

14. Overview

The documentary analysis above has identified a number of areas where we believe the assessment could be strengthened, both in the short term, before its publication and over the medium term as the response analysis develops and the Plan is produced. In addition to this we organised a phone call to discuss the assessment with members of the PSB team who had been involved in the process. The aim of the phone call was to provide us with an opportunity to clarify/explore particular issues that our initial review has highlighted and to enable the PSB to flag up issues which are part of the broader context of assessment production.

A number of clear, recurring broad themes have emerged from our review and the conversation. It is clear that this has been a huge undertaking over a relatively short period of time, and that partners have put a great deal of effort into producing the draft assessment. Of particular importance for the Office is that you build on this work to provide a clearer strategic picture of well-being by interpreting the data within a broader context under each theme

We believe the following issues need to be tackled to improve the assessment:

strategic context – setting a broader strategic context for Neath Port Talbot over the short, medium and long term to provide the ‘setting’ for the topics.

area and place – to provide a greater understanding of well-being within areas of Neath Port Talbot, its towns, valleys, and rural areas to better reflect the key issues for well-being in different localities – and to develop the eight area profiles to help in this process.

interpretation and significance – more explanation of how the topics impact on well-being of individuals and communities and on public services and their significance *specifically* in Neath Port Talbot.

integration across themes – a greater focus on the inter-relationships between the data gathered for the topics and the implications of this for well-being.

challenges and assets – provide a clearer synthesis of short, medium and long term challenges to well-being and broader understanding of economic, social and cultural assets and their role in well-being across the area.

regional context – a greater understanding of Neath Port Talbot’s role within the region and the potential impact of Swansea Bay and Cardiff City Deals

future trends – greater attention given to the potential impact of long term trends on well-being in Neath Port Talbot as a whole and in the eight community areas

moving forward – provide a clearer description of how the Assessment data is intended to be used, how data gaps are to be managed and how well-being planning will progress.

It is recognised that some of these may be addressed in the PSBs proposed activities between now and the final publication of the assessment.

We hope that the issues raised above will inform this collaborative work so that these elements are reflected more strongly by the PSB in the final Well-being Assessment and throughout the well-being planning process.