

Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board: Well-being assessment

Feedback and advice from the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales,
14th March 2022

1: Summary

- A strong well-being assessment that explores a wide range of topics and themes in an integrated manner.
- Clearly presented with a structure set out according to methodology, well-being dimensions, well-being goals, community areas and a directory of topics.
- 'Engagement led' approach including a variety of methods and techniques.
- Good range of data and information used throughout, including honest recognition of potential 'limitations'.
- Section 3 (below) highlights some areas that if further developed would help strengthen the assessment. These are: involvement, future trends, equality, Welsh language, presentation and layout, and maximising your PSB's contribution to Wales' well-being goals.
- Section 3 also outlines other (desirable) areas for consideration within the assessment.

2: Evidence of good practice in the well-being assessment

Process and methodology

It is positive to hear you have taken an 'engagement led' approach with local communities and staff who work in public sector organisations. This helps promote the voice of residents within the overall findings and ensures the language is more accessible.

The draft assessment outlines your approach to community engagement which included virtual workshops, questionnaires, and focus groups with young people. We particularly welcome your work to develop a regional interactive community voice forum for 'representatives of seldom heard groups', to ensure broader perspectives are included within the assessment. The community engagement techniques also suggest a level of collaboration between PSB partners and wider community groups. For example, by providing hard copies of the survey at One Stop Shops and in libraries.

The draft assessment demonstrates good integration across a broad range of topics, dimensions of well-being and well-being goals – this is one of the assessment's strengths. For example, it is good to see the narrative on transport discuss inequality and the potential for access to affordable electric vehicles will be a barrier for those on low incomes, and that those most at risk of socio-economic disadvantage will likely only have access to older electric vehicles or more polluting petrol/diesel vehicles which become more expensive to run.

There is honest reflection on the challenges around the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in relation to engagement. This is also true in your reflection on your ability to analyse social and cultural networks, the community sector, and the role of the non-monetary economy (e.g., unpaid care, food banks, community asset transfer) which you say has been a challenge.

It is also good to see the assessment consider the potential longer-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, where for example, you highlight the potential for possible changes in the way higher education is delivered which may influence where young people live, changes in employment

opportunities and practices, and increasing housing prices if home-working opportunities encourage relocation from outside the area.

There is a good range of data sources used throughout the draft assessment as well as clear recognition of potential 'limitations'. It's helpful each strategic topic includes a summary of limitations in your evidence or analysis, and your commitment to working collaboratively across the region to help address these. For example, it highlights quantitative data gaps in relation to people with protected characteristics which suggests you have interrogated the data and the way traditional datasets may exclude marginalised groups.

The assessment highlights how it builds on the work undertaken and published in 2017 and aims to provide an outline of the more strategic issues affecting the counties of Conwy and Denbighshire. It is good to hear of your intent to consider prioritising a number of the topic areas to keep the assessment manageable and impactful. As you state, this should help provide a clear bridge between the strategic topics discussed and the response as you develop your well-being plan.

The draft assessment states *"it is intended only as the first step in the process and will evolve as an assessment over time, particularly as regional research and engagement (including co-production) relationships and partnerships develop."* This suggests a commitment to continuous and iterative learning to inform your activities.

We welcome your inclusion of questions about the assessment you'll focus on. For example, what does the Assessment tell us about well-being? Are current approaches adequate? What further activity is needed and what collective action can address the issues etc? These will be important considerations as attention shifts to development of your well-being plan.

Content

The inclusion of an executive summary is helpful and enables you to identify 14 issues/opportunities. As you say, this is to help *"move from a space with a vast amount of knowledge to a place where you can see the connections, the tensions, and the opportunities."*

The structure of the draft assessment works well and demonstrates a clear understanding and commitment to the Well-being of Future Generations Act. It includes analysis according to the four dimensions of well-being alongside summaries for each of the seven well-being goals.

For each dimension of well-being, there are five key sections: current assets and challenges; expected change (opportunities and risk); what people have told you; opportunities for interventions; and topics within each theme. Similarly, each topic area embeds past and future trends alongside any knowledge gaps.

In addition to this, the well-being goal chapters bring together information presented across the assessment into summaries aligned to Wales' well-being goals to *"help partners and communities see the connections, tensions and opportunities."* This is a positive feature and the chapters provide a good overview of information, including priorities from Welsh Government's Programme for Government. The key questions posed towards the end of each section are also insightful, e.g., under a Prosperous Wales, it asks *"To what extent we feel we are supporting the low carbon economy with the different skillsets it needs now, and in the future?"*

The 'Opportunities for targeted interventions' section within the well-being themes works well in providing concise information for PSB members and others to be aware of. For example, the economic well-being chapter includes points on the well-being economy, tourism, the North Wales Energy Strategy, the 20 minute neighbourhood concept etc.

Similarly, the 'directory of topics' table is particularly helpful in outlining how topics align to the well-being goals, ranging from skills, employment and tourism to equality, diversity and cohesion and reducing emissions. This demonstrates recognition that the seven goals are designed to be considered in an integrated manner, and not in isolation.

The draft assessment's structure enables it to draw out the links and connections between different elements of well-being. There is a risk well-being assessments can consider topics and themes in isolation, but this is avoided through your consideration of all topics from a variety of angles and perspectives.

The assessment regularly makes ties to wider reports and assessments to inform its findings. This is helpful in ensuring the analysis and conclusions drawn within the assessment are likely to remain relevant to the PSB's future planning and decision making. Longer term, in the next round of assessments and well-being plans, your PSB will have the evidence to reflect on how well their activities delivered against a challenging policy climate which includes the climate crisis, Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic. Good examples within the report include the section 'Key Employment Sector – Tourism' which cites research from the Wales Centre for Public Policy, including their briefing on the impacts of Covid-19 and Brexit on well-being, alongside national datasets and strategies such as Welsh Government's tourism strategy.

A strength of the assessment is the balance achieved between the chapters which provide the national, strategic information and narrative, which is then complimented with the information in the 'Community Areas' tab. The Denbighshire community area overviews in particular, provide rich local information in relation to each of the 7 well-being goals. For example, it highlights in Elwy (in the 'Resilient Wales' chapter) a number of local environmental improvements planned (e.g. the designation and management of Rhuddlan Local Nature Reserve) together with key concerns for the area including flooding at St Asaph, Rhuddlan and agricultural land.

The cultural well-being chapter provides a good overview, exploring a variety of areas including the Welsh language, agriculture, equality, education etc. The focus on 'food security and local agricultural and food sectors' within the environmental well-being chapter is also great to see. This is complimented with what people have told you, which highlighted the appreciation for local farming and food businesses and enthusiasm to see these sectors grow and employ more people, retaining local spend and supporting climate change by utilising local sources.

We note the positive recognition in the assessment of the role the public sector has in addressing its contribution to carbon emissions, recognising the *"levers to stimulate a lower carbon more widely, across geographies, for example through procurement, service design and regulatory regimes."* In section 3 below, we include a link to our [bitesize resource on procurement](#) which provides a helpful summary on the Commissioner's vision for procurement.

The 'Transport and Road Safety' topic makes links across social, economic and environmental well-being and it's reassuring to see references are made to [Llwybr Newydd](#) (the Wales Transport Strategy 2021).

The footnotes at the end of each section make it easy to identify data sources throughout.

3: Areas that could be further developed

Important areas for consideration

Building on the extensive work already undertaken for your well-being assessment, below are areas we consider to be important for your consideration. If developed further, they would help strengthen the assessment overall.

Involvement

It is reassuring to hear you have taken an 'engagement led' approach, with contributions from the public, community groups, young people, local business and staff working across the public sector, via workshops and online surveys.

The assessment is honest in reflecting the challenges of engaging during the pandemic, which contributed to a small response rate. Positively, you highlight the good quality, constructive feedback you received, and that the young people you spoke to were very engaged.

You provide a helpful overview of your engagement activity. This included: a review of all recent engagement; running the County Conversation with people across Conwy and Denbighshire through virtual workshops and questionnaires; virtual focus groups with young people; a regional interactive community voice forum for representatives of 'seldom heard' groups; involvement of staff; and elected member engagement.

The 'what people have told us' sections provide clear and strong overviews on what people have told you on some of the key themes for the area. For example, it's particularly striking within the 'Economic well-being chapter' how much of the feedback is focussed on climate change and the environment, covering areas such as decarbonisation (e.g., housing, transport etc), better public transport and active travel, infrastructure to help active lifestyles, the desire to attract 'green' employers to the area and a strong emphasis on tourism etc.

Looking ahead, you state *"this is only the beginning of the conversation and we will continue to engage with people as we finalise the assessment and develop our well-being objectives and plan going forward."*

With this in mind, it would be helpful if the assessment included some further reflection on your thinking and approach to involvement going forward, as attention shifts to the well-being plan. For example, are you clear on what you feel has worked well, and the areas you feel you could (potentially) improve? Building on your forum for 'representatives of seldom heard groups', are you exploring other approaches or techniques for engaging with seldom heard voices? Are there opportunities to incorporate some lived experiences in your assessment, or the design of your well-being plan, enabling residents in your area to tell their story more fully? And are there any lessons from your collaborative work on involvement and in participating in the Co-Production Network for Wales supported work?

Using and adopting strong, innovative involvement techniques that go beyond engagement and move more towards co-production is important for all PSBs. To help inform the next stages of the well-being planning process, the Co-production Network for Wales is producing advice and guidance

based on the way in which involvement and co-production has been embedded in the well-being process so far. We encourage your PSB teams and coordinators to help shape this guidance with Co-Production Network for Wales, as it develops.

Future trends

The draft assessment demonstrates consideration and reference to longer-term information. This is predominantly found within the narrative of the well-being dimension chapters and the 'what we know or predict about the future' sections of each topic. For example, the 'Expected change: risks and opportunities' section of the environmental well-being chapter looks at the longer-term picture on areas such as nature recovery, climate change resilience/adaptation, energy, food and technology and transport. This includes the use of information taken from the UK Government Office for Science's 'trend deck', which is reassuring to see.

While much of the narrative is strategic and broad in its nature, it is good to see some exploration of what the longer-term picture might mean for your area locally. For example, the social well-being chapter sets out a range of broad challenges and is complimented with local information showing Conwy and Denbighshire have high numbers of people providing unpaid care, and some smaller areas such as Conwy's 'East' sub-area having high levels of limiting long term illness and a higher proportion of unpaid carers.

Overall, it's evident a great deal of work has been undertaken to understand and set out your analysis of the longer-term picture. Building on this positive work, the draft assessment would be strengthened if clearer links could be made to the [2021 future trends report](#) for Wales, published in December 2021. This includes ensuring you have made the links to the four big drivers of change and two public service drivers it identifies.

We also encourage you to be assured each of the topics identified within the assessment includes some analysis and interpretation of what the key future trends might mean for Conwy and Denbighshire locally, where this is possible. As currently presented, this is not always consistent across the topics. Identifying the links and potential implications between the broad, high level trends and your local context is very important for the PSB as work begins on its well-being plan.

Looking ahead, it would also be helpful if additional insight could also be provided to understand how the PSB will continue to consider and embed future trends information as its focus shifts to the well-being plan, and the setting of objectives and steps. Futures techniques are effective tools for engaging with others and prompting constructive discussion in a way that can help develop plans that deliver meaningful change. In their feedback to PSBs, NRW are offering to run Three Horizons workshop to help support the incorporation of future trends into the well-being planning process, and we encourage you to consider taking up this offer if you haven't already.

In conjunction with your plans for ongoing engagement, we also encourage you to involve the people and communities you consider to be the most affected by the trends you've highlighted as most relevant for your area. This is to ensure their voices are being heard. A better understanding of their concerns and priorities for action will help you plan your next steps.

Equality

The 'Equality, diversity and community cohesion' topic provides a good overview and it's positive to hear you state this assessment has improved analysis on the well-being gap of people with protected characteristics or people in poverty.

An example of good practice is the work to develop the regional interactive community voice forum for 'representatives of seldom heard groups', to ensure broader perspectives are included within the assessment. Here, you highlight over 50 organisations attended and additional workshops were offered to Deaf and Visually impaired forums.

The assessment acknowledges certain gaps in information and data. For example, under the 'skills' topic, it states a better understanding of the educational outcomes of people with protected characteristics is needed going forward. And while you note data is not available nationally nor locally to assess how intersectionality impacts well-being, it is positive you have acknowledged it, highlighting how people may possess overlapping identities or multiple protected characteristics.

Building on the positive work undertaken so far, we recommend ensuring all '[protected characteristics](#)' outlined in the Equality Act are considered within the assessment.

With regard to the pandemic, it is reassuring to see the assessment recognise how it has exposed existing inequalities and that the long-term health and well-being consequences are also likely to be unequally distributed, exacerbating health inequalities for individuals from poorer and disadvantaged backgrounds, ethnic minority groups and deprived communities.

To help the PSB explore how it can work together to prevent this, we encourage you to consider the implications of our recent '[Inequality in a future Wales](#)' report. It highlights the future of work, changing demographics and how climate change could increase existing inequalities if the impacts on different groups in society are not factored in.

Welsh language

It's good to hear through your engagement people have told you about the importance of the Welsh language and culture to their communities. This included feedback on wanting to see more done to sustain, value and protect it, with suggestions such as accessible and affordable Welsh language classes within the community and in schools.

Overall, the percentage of people who can speak Welsh is higher in Conwy (41%) and Denbighshire (31.9%) than the Welsh average (29.1%). Despite this, we recognise your honest appraisal that its use in daily life is of great concern, as it is "*arguably the strongest indicator of the vitality of the language*". You also refer to national research that suggests the use of Welsh is in long term decline and state further work is needed to develop your understanding of the trends locally.

In moving to setting objectives and steps within your well-being plan, we recommend clear links are made to each local authority's promotional strategies and your relevant Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP).

Presentation and layout

The draft assessment is clearly presented with a structure set out according to methodology, well-being dimensions, well-being goals, community areas and a directory of topics. While this structure works well and ensures comprehensive and in-depth coverage of key issues and topics, it is sometimes challenging for the reader to know if they have covered all the content covering a particular topic or theme.

It is appreciated you will have limited time to consider this before publishing your final assessment, but we would encourage you to consider if there are any small steps you can take that might help simplify the assessment's overall accessibility and structure to make it easier to navigate. This will also be an important consideration for the development and presentation of your well-being plan.

Maximising the PSB's contribution to Wales' well-being goals

Understanding the full definition of Wales' well-being goals can help ensure the assessment is considering the wide range of topics and themes of well-being within your area.

The table below sets out areas that could be explored further within the assessment, and/or taken into consideration for the well-being plan.

It is appreciated that it may not be possible for all the information below to be fully considered / incorporated in your assessment. Instead, you may wish to choose some areas to compliment the extensive work you have already undertaken:

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| Skills for the future | The assessment considers educational attainment, and some future skills needs according to growth sectors such as energy, health and social care, and digital and creative issues. Building on this, we encourage you to consider the findings in our recent report here on the skills needed to transition to a low carbon economy. It finds that across Wales there are significant skills gaps in green industries which must be addressed. |
| North Wales Regional Economic Framework | The North Wales Regional Economic Framework is a useful resource the PSB could consider, particularly in discussion of skills and key employment sectors. |
| The foundational economy and fair and local supply chains | Positive to see the 'Supporting small business' topic and the assessment recognising the <i>"levers to stimulate a lower carbon more widely, across geographies, for example through procurement, service design and regulatory regimes."</i> Our bitesize resource on procurement provides a helpful summary on the Commissioner's vision for procurement, identifying the key issues highlighted by public bodies during the research and Section 20 Review, as well the recommendations outlined in our ' Procuring well-being in Wales ' report. |
| Circular economy and consumption | Recycling and reducing waste is covered within the assessment, with reference to Wales' 'Zero Waste' strategy. To strengthen this area, you could further explore what Wales's strategy for a circular economy means for your area, e.g. helping communities share items, food waste, electric fleet etc. PSBs should be seeking ways to understand how a circular economy approach can help them meet a number of well-being priorities. |

Other areas for consideration (desirable)

These are areas you might wish to amend / update to strengthen the assessment overall:

Collaboration

There is some strong evidence to suggest the well-being assessment has been undertaken in a collaborative manner, with the two local authorities working together alongside embedding the work by wider stakeholders into the findings. It would be helpful if further detail could be provided on your collaboration in the 'Introduction and background' section and if the assessment identified

all the partners and how the collaboration was managed. Cross-sector collaboration is a challenging but often effective means of delivering social change, and this information would help for future learning.

'What people have told us'

These sections are a real strength to the assessment. You may also wish to consider a summary of headlines in these sections, to help summarise the rich messages shared through the narrative. At the end of the economic well-being section, you mention how powerful the quote from a resident is on St Peter's Square in Ruthin. Including more examples of quotes would strengthen these sections.

Well-being goals

The key questions posed towards the end of each well-being goal section are insightful. For example, under a Globally Responsible Wales, it asks: *"Do we have information that waste goes abroad?"* and *"Do we have any Sanctuary Towns for refugees?"* It would be helpful if a brief explanation could be provided for how the PSB intends to seek answers to these questions.

Cultural well-being

The cultural well-being chapter provides a good overview of the area and highlights the potential for a North Wales approach to maximising opportunities from tourism and regeneration to ensure benefits are targeted on areas and groups whose well-being tends to be poorer.

With this in mind, can additional information about Conwy's cultural strategy be included or referenced to? We understand Conwy has received some community renewal funding, with projects focused on sustainable/cultural tourism and work exploring more effective collaboration on culture and art sectors in the area.

Minor considerations

- The tabs that have "no data" could be removed.
- Under the 'Tackling Obesity' topic, in 'what is happening now' the statistics referred to may need double checking, as it appears some bullet points may have digits missing from some of the percentages on obesity.

4: Resources to help inform your next steps

Below are resources that can help inform your next steps, as you move from well-being assessment to well-being plan:

- Chapter 4 of the Future Generations Report: ['Setting Good Well-being Objectives'](#)
- The ['Future Generations Framework for Projects'](#)
- [Case studies](#) of how the Act is being implemented on the ground in Wales
- Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales: [Resources](#)