

## Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board: Well-being assessment

Feedback and advice from the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales,  
4<sup>th</sup> May 2022

### 1: Summary

- A strong, well presented well-being assessment.
- Good coverage of information and topics across the four dimensions of well-being and Wales' well-being goals.
- Includes area profiles, an overarching summary and a helpful video summary.
- Good use of multimedia tools which help present the data in an accessible and digestible manner (visuals, a video and infographics).
- Section 3 (below) highlights some areas that if further developed, would help to strengthen the assessment. These relate to: involvement, future trends, equality, skills for the future, integration and maximising 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**

The draft assessment has drawn upon a wide range of quantitative and qualitative sources, supporting the statement in the introduction which says a large amount of information and evidence has been collated and analysed, including research, performance information, evidence collected to inform the Council's Local Development Plan and other local and national assessments.

It's positive to hear of the collaboration between your PSB and Swansea PSB, working closely together and taking a regional approach where possible. For the assessment itself, you highlight it has involved the work and input of representatives from the local authority, Natural Resources Wales, Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Public Health Wales and Swansea University.

The assessment highlights you have linked with the Regional Partnership Board, reducing the need for multiple requests for data and avoiding a duplication of resources and effort. It's reassuring to hear of plans to continue to co-ordinate data collation across the region to retain an up-to-date picture going forward.

We welcome the work you're doing (with Swansea PSB) to commission Swansea University to produce an over-arching analytical chapter to supplement the findings and provide both PSBs with a meaningful picture of what the information means for your communities. If available to share, we would be interested to see this information.

#### **Content**

The presentation and layout of the webpage is clear and easy to follow and the structure of the assessment, set out against the four dimensions of well-being, works well.

It's good to see the assessment use a variety of formats including interactive infographics, PDF documents and a video. This approach helps make the assessment more engaging, and we welcome the use of a video to explain the well-being assessment, the Well-being of Future Generations Act and relevance to your local area.

On the webpage, the assessment clearly highlights eight local areas that make up Neath Port Talbot, the same areas identified by the PSB identified in 2017. Hovering over each of the areas gives a snapshot of each locality, with a good mix of information that cuts across the four dimensions of well-being.

The 'Introduction' summary provides a helpful overview. We welcome your inclusion of the expectations shared by Welsh Government and our office in March 2021, which serves as a helpful reminder of some of the key areas of focus for well-being assessments.

We welcome your reference to placemaking as a holistic approach to the planning and design of development and spaces and the links made to the area's Local Development Plan in the housing chapter. As you say, a place-based approach means rather than starting from one particular policy objective, you start from the needs of real places. It's positive to hear you say you have explored evidence for the area, the benefits its assets can provide, and explored how national priorities, risks and opportunities are reflected in that place.

In the themed reports, it's helpful for readers to see sections begin with descriptions of the issues and topics being discussed. For example, the 'Mental well-being and health' section opens with the following description: "*Mental health is a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community*" (World Health Organisation, 2014). It's also helpful to see the main chapters highlight (at the start), the main categories within them.

There is good recognition of the impact of the pandemic throughout the draft assessment. For example, its impact on employment in the areas (lower than the UK average) and educational attainment and cultural activities. The assessment refers to ONS data which highlights approximately 12.5 million people in the UK are now financially worse off by a combination of the pandemic and Brexit, as well as links to data relating to the impact of Covid-19 on NHS activity.

A strength of the assessment is that it provides examples of ongoing projects and programmes within Neath Port Talbot that seek to improve well-being. For example, in the summary against the well-being goals, the draft assessment notes the role that the Afan Valley cycling centre has in promoting cycling, alongside wider arts and culture. The draft assessment also shares information on projects that support innovation and low carbon growth as part of Swansea Bay City Deal's £1.8 billion programme. This includes SPECIFIC, (an innovation and knowledge centre), the Hydrogen Research Centre, the Flexible Integrated Energy Systems Project (FLEXIS) and the TWI Technology Centre (Wales). The assessment also highlights Neath Port Talbot Council is taking the lead on promoting and delivering the Homes as Power Stations project as part of the wider City Region Deal.

In the 'Social' chapter, the sections on safety and crime are particularly strong, including analysis of cyber crimes and scams, and the focus on wildfires with detailed information provided by Mid and West Wales Fire & Rescue Service.

The 'Economy' chapter provides a good overview of the local economy and its key activities and sectors. It's reassuring to see the focus in the 'Economy' chapter on 'Wider Economic Opportunities and Challenges' where the assessment discusses climate change, net zero and decarbonisation. This includes honest reflection of the challenge in the area given the context of the significant industrial base driving the highest carbon intensity of any local authority in the UK. The SWOT analysis included as 'Appendix 1' at the end of the chapter is also insightful, setting out the area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Similarly, it's positive the assessment takes time to consider the role of Tata Steel in terms of economic well-being for the area, and makes the point *"the economic influence of employers such as Tata steel cannot be underestimated in maintaining the current income levels. Any further restructuring of the industry would impact the economic well-being of a significant percentage of NPT residents directly employed within the company or within its supply chain"*.

The cultural well-being chapter gives a wonderful flavour of the area, reflecting the area's rich contribution to history, culture and the arts. It's great to hear the 'Let's Talk' campaign provoked a passionate response from residents around the subject of heritage and history, and the focus on climate change in relation to cultural heritage.

We welcome the cultural well-being chapter's focus on some of the area's arts centres, such as Pontardawe Arts Centre, the Princess Royal Theatre and the Gwyn Hall. For example, it highlights how Pontardawe Arts Centre seeks to enrich people's lives through their engagement in the arts, and how the venue is committed to working closely with partners and applying principals of social inclusion and equality of opportunity.

The cultural well-being chapter's focus on play provision for children and young people is also welcome. Particularly striking is the information contained under 'challenges' from the Play Sufficiency Assessment. For example, in relation to diverse needs gaps, it states there's only one designated play space which has equipment for children with disabilities. In geographical gaps, it highlights that 22 wards have no youth service provision.

The draft assessment's consideration of Welsh Language is a strength. It helpfully provides an overview of historical trends, the areas where it is most widely used and spoken, information from the annual population survey, schools and the Council's draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-2020 (WESP). Positively, it highlights that in 2016 there were 15.5% of children receiving education through the medium of Welsh, and in 2020, this had increased to 16.1%. It also provides information on example projects delivered by schools and other organisations in the area to increase its uptake (e.g., The Swansea Bay Region Centre for Learning Welsh), and makes connections to wider aspects of cultural well-being, such as attracting Welsh speaking volunteers via the Third Sector Support Network.

The draft assessment's chapter on environment well-being is extensive, setting out both the global and local-level context. It's reassuring to see links to the 'Key sources of information' and 'Supplementary information' provided at the end of the chapter, as well as the chapter's regular reference to key documents such as NRW's State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) and the UK Climate Change Committee's Climate Change Risk Assessment 3 (CCRA3).

The draft assessment shares information on the Connecting Green Infrastructure (South West Wales) project, a £2.28 million project aims to take a strategic approach to the maintenance, enhancement and creation of green infrastructure for the benefit of people, the economy and wildlife across Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, and Carmarthenshire. This will be an important project for the area given you state other assessments have suggested the area rates poorly in terms of accessible natural greenspace, and the feedback from the Let's Talk campaign where respondents rated green spaces and improvements in areas such as beaches as one of the highest priority actions for improving life for residents.

The 'Summary' document is a strong addition to the assessment, bringing together all the information set out in the four main chapters into one overarching summary (in relation to Wales'

well-being goals). The 'Summary of considerations' is particularly helpful in providing a concise overview of the key issues and topics facing Neath Port Talbot.

### 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

The assessment highlights 'Let's Talk', an open-ended consultation that began in the summer of 2021 as part of an extensive engagement campaign as an opportunity for the public to talk about what matters to them. While the feedback is being used to develop a recovery plan for the county borough, the PSB agreed the findings would also be suitable to inform your well-being assessment.

The assessment states the questionnaire has received 1,694 responses and a series of online focus groups and in-depth interviews have been held involving 30 residents of the Afan, Amman, Dulais, Neath and Swansea Valleys. We welcome the mixed methods approach – using a quantitative survey supplemented by in-depth, qualitative findings.

Further information is provided within the 'Summary' document in relation to public perceptions of change. Here, it states residents were substantially influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change and work also highlighted other key themes including increased community ownership, access to services, mental well-being, anti-social behaviour, the local economy and work-life balance.

Building on the work to date, it would be beneficial if the assessment could provide further information on:

- 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?
- Any information on the demographics of respondents to the 'Let's Talk' campaign?
- Related to the above point, any work undertaken to reach out to 'seldom heard voices', or any approaches or techniques being considered and explored?
- If there are any 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?
- Any other work ongoing or planned with organisations to gain more resident perspectives?

It would also be helpful for wider learning if the 'Let's Ask' survey and topic guide could be shared as an annex.

The 'Public perceptions of priorities going forward' section of the summary document highlights "A key theme that underpins the frustrations and priorities of residents identified above is the urgent need for improved partnership working between the Council and residents...They recommended a more collaborative approach, where residents are involved in decision making, with a voice for all

*communities, including those smaller, neglected areas and transparency over, and input into, financial decisions.”*

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 ‘Introduction’ summary states *“What communities want and need in the future will fundamentally change as our planet requires rapid decarbonisation and restoration of nature, demographic trends such as urbanisation and an ageing population continue, and as technology continues to change the way we live and work.”*

While the ‘Social’, ‘Culture’ and ‘Environment’ chapters finish with the header ‘How will well-being be affected by future trends?’, the analysis of future trends within these chapters is relatively limited overall, with little reference to Wales’ Future Trends Report.

The environment chapter is stronger in its consideration of future trends, including a specific section on it in relation to the key topic areas explored such as climate change, water, marine, flooding, air etc. For example, in relation to water, it states *“It is expected we will see an increase in the frequency and intensity of droughts, fluvial and coastal floods and heatwaves”*, and then goes on to provide some local analysis of what this might mean for the area in relation to water supply and security.

Building on your work to date, the draft assessment would be strengthened if clearer and more consistent links could be made to the [2021 future trends report](#) for Wales (published in December 2021) across the four main chapters (social, economic, environment, cultural).

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 Neath Port Talbot locally, where this is possible to do so. 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. Our Three Horizons toolkit is available [here](#).

In conjunction with any engagement work you may have planned, we also encourage you to involve the people and communities you consider to be the most affected by the trends you highlight 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

Across its four main chapters, the draft assessment does well to assess equality within Neath Port Talbot. For example, it's reassuring to see the focus on safety, hate crime and violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. The housing chapter includes information on 'Adaptations – The Disability Facility Grant (DFG)', which pays for essential adaptations to aid disabled people gain better freedom of movement into and around their homes by providing access to essential facilities within their home.

The environment chapter includes a focus on inequalities relating to increased climate risks, and the 'Community' section of the cultural well-being chapter includes information from the community profile of Black Minority Ethnic communities work (carried out in 2018 by NPTCVS, the BME Community Association and NPTCBC). And we note there are 59 different languages and dialects spoken in schools across Neath Port Talbot, where 722 pupils out of 20,764 speak languages other than English and Welsh as a first language.

Building on the positive work undertaken to date, we recommend:

- Ensuring all '[protected characteristics](#)' outlined in the Equality Act are considered within the assessment.
- Some consideration is given to how intersectionality affects people in the area. For example, what is like to be young and LGBTQ+ in Neath Port Talbot?
- Making the links to your engagement work on engaging with seldom heard voices, as this develops.

With regard to the pandemic, it's positive the assessment recognises its impact on the prevalence of mental health disorders, and that universal and targeted interventions will be required to combat a likely increase. With this in mind, we encourage you to consider the implications of our recent '[Inequality in a future Wales](#)' report. This highlights how the future of work, changing demographics and climate change could increase existing inequalities if the impacts on different groups in society are not factored in.

## Skills for the future

The 'Economy' chapter provides good analysis on 'jobs: growth and density', with observations on potential future demand to 2027, the local economy and education, qualifications, skills and apprenticeships.

The assessment is honest in its reflection on the substantial challenges Neath Port Talbot faces in achieving Net Zero goals, given the context of its industrial base and high industrial carbon intensity. However, it also recognises the significant opportunities for the area to demonstrate innovation and leadership in decarbonising its economy.

For example, the assessment states the local authority and its local/regional partners are working to create a more skilled workforce in the future and states it has initiated the development of a new Economic Development Recovery Plan to provide a strategy (for the medium to long term) and action plan that focuses on achieving employment and business growth within a more diverse and resilient economy. Here it highlights floating off-shore wind turbines and the development of Port Talbot Docks as an opportunity to develop skilled labour for the area and become a "*Globally Significant Turbine Production Hub*".

The future of work and changing demographics are significant areas for Neath Port Talbot. As attention shifts towards your well-being plan, we encourage the PSB to fully consider future trends information and the skills needed for the future, how they relate to your area, and the significance they may hold across all four dimensions of well-being.

We note your reflection on how the pandemic has potentially affected SME investment and work schedules to invest in the upskilling of staff and new ways of working such as retrofitting and green skills, and a potential disconnect between net zero policy goals and the appetite of business to engage. This is all the more reason for collaborating and involving a wider set of people to help review and design your well-being objectives. For example, schools (pupils, governors, headteachers), Further and Higher Education institutions; local business; community groups; Regional Skills Partnerships and others.

There are also resource available that may also help you in this area. A summary analysis of our recent report with New Economics Foundation on 'Skills and training for a prosperous, green and equal recovery' can be found [here](#). The report finds there are significant skills gaps in green industries across Wales which must be addressed. And our recent '[Inequality in a future Wales](#)' report (referred to above) looks at inequality in relation to trends on the future of work, demographic change and climate change.

### **Integration**

The draft assessment does explore some topics in an integrated manner, across the four dimensions of well-being and Wales' well-being goals. This is most evident in the 'Summary' document in relation to the well-being goals.

For example, under 'A Wales of Cohesive Communities' the assessment links access to green space (environmental well-being) to mental and physical health (social well-being). Likewise, the economic well-being chapter does well to link development to environmental well-being and notes the importance of the decarbonisation plan for Tata steel.

Building on these examples, there are opportunities for integration that could be explored further in the assessment. For example:

- The links to fuel poverty and decarbonisation could be strengthened in the section on housing.
- As per our comments below on transport, the discussion of air quality in the environment chapter could make clearer links to the role public transport and active travel could have in limiting the number of cars on the road, which in turn links to community infrastructure and improved well-being.
- The wider determinants of health could be explored in more detail in the social well-being chapter, with connections made to the other three main chapters.

### **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

<b>Brexit</b>	While Brexit is highlighted in the environment chapter as a key risk which has the capacity to have a significant future impact on land management in Neath Port Talbot, it could be explored further elsewhere in the assessment, particularly the economic well-being chapter. The WCPP's briefing: <a href="#">'The impacts of Covid-19 and Brexit on well-being'</a> is a helpful resource on this.
<b>Transport</b>	While transport is discussed in relation to road safety, air quality, and as one of the three areas of transformation identified by SoNaRR, there is no specific section or chapter focussed on transport as such. Given the summary document highlights many comments from residents focused on the need for an improved community infrastructure, including better transport links that are reliable, adequate to meet travel needs, and affordable, this could be further explored in the assessment with information provided on where Neath Port Talbot is in relation to sustainable transport options. Links should also be made to the three headline priorities and sustainable transport hierarchy within <a href="#">Llwybr Newydd</a> (the Wales Transport Strategy 2021).
<b>Tourism</b>	Could be explored further across the four dimensions of well-being, given the economy chapter briefly highlights it contributed £120 million to the local economy in 2018, and supports approximately 1,500 jobs.
<b>The foundational economy and fair and local supply chains</b>	The assessment acknowledges <i>"both the pandemic and Brexit have encouraged firms to build greater supply chain resilience with more companies now planning to source supplies locally and hold more inventory."</i> Our <a href="#">bitesize resource on procurement</a> 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 as the recommendations outlined in our <a href="#">'Procuring well-being in Wales'</a> report.

### Other areas for consideration (desirable)

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

- **Resilient Wales:** Page 5 of the 'Environment' chapter highlights text from the Healthier, Prosperous and More Equal Wales well-being goals, but not the Resilient Wales well-being goal. The text here should be amended to include text from this goal.
- **Collaboration:** Building on the collaborative approach taken to developing the assessment in the region, it would be beneficial if the assessment included any reflection on the collaboration to date in the development of the assessment. This information would help for future learning, as cross-sector collaboration is a challenging but often effective means of delivering social change.
- **Lifestyle:** The 'Lifestyle' section of the social chapter could make links to the play provision for children and young people section of the cultural well-being chapter.
- **Response to the pandemic:** We would welcome a greater reflection on how the PSB is considering ways it can build upon any of the collaboration and trust developed with organisations across sectors during the pandemic.
- **Minor:** It would be helpful if each of the well-being dimension chapters were consistent in their use of contents pages to increase ease of access. The structure of the environment chapter is easy to follow and well set out, whereas the social chapter, for example, does not have a contents page set out in the same way.

#### 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](#)