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# Review of Public Services Boards



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**Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.**

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# Summary report

## Public Services Boards are unlikely to realise their potential unless they are given freedom to work more flexibly and think and act differently

- 1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the 'Act') sets out the Welsh Government's ambitions to improve the social, cultural, environmental and economic wellbeing of Wales. The Act requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to help prevent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.
- 2 The Act establishes statutory Public Services Boards (PSBs) which have replaced the voluntary Local Service Boards in each local authority area. Each board is required to assess the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing in its area and set objectives that are designed to maximise its contribution to the national wellbeing goals.
- 3 The Statutory Members of each PSB are the local council, the local health board, the fire and rescue authority and Natural Resources Wales. In addition to these statutory members, each PSB will invite the following to participate: Welsh Ministers, chief constables, the police and crime commissioner for their area, certain probation services, national park authority (if applicable), and at least one body representing relevant local voluntary organisations. PSBs can also invite other public service organisations to participate, for example, education providers such as colleges and universities and housing associations, and private bodies such as business forums.
- 4 PSBs are promoted by the Welsh Government as the key body collectively responsible for improving the wellbeing of communities across Wales and currently there are 19 PSBs – [Exhibit 1](#).
- 5 The Act requires each PSB to undertake a local wellbeing assessment every five years. PSBs are also required to prepare and publish a plan (the 'local wellbeing plan') setting out their objectives and the steps they will take to meet them. The plan must set out why the PSB feels their objectives will contribute, within their local area, to achieving the national wellbeing goals and how it has taken regard of their assessment of local wellbeing in setting its objectives and steps to take. All PSBs completed wellbeing assessments and published Local Wellbeing Plans in line with the statutory deadlines.

## Exhibit 1 – PSBs in Wales

There are 19 PSBs: one in each local authority except for a Cwm Taf PSB which covers Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf (set up before Bridgend was realigned with the Cwm Taf footprint), a combined PSB for Gwynedd and Isle of Anglesey and a joint PSB for Conwy and Denbighshire.

### Public Service Boards

- 1 Carmarthenshire
- 2 Ceredigion
- 3 Conwy and Denbighshire
- 4 Gwynedd and Isle of Anglesey
- 5 Monmouthshire
- 6 Pembrokeshire
- 7 Powys
- 8 Blaenau Gwent
- 9 Bridgend
- 10 Caerphilly
- 11 Flintshire
- 12 Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf
- 13 Neath Port Talbot
- 14 Swansea
- 15 Torfaen
- 16 Wrexham
- 17 Vale of Glamorgan
- 18 Cardiff
- 19 Newport



- 6 When producing their assessments of local wellbeing and Local Wellbeing Plan, PSBs must consult widely. The PSB should seek to involve the people and communities in the area, including children and young people, Welsh speakers and those with protected characteristics, in all aspects of its work. Each PSB will carry out an annual review of its plan showing its progress. Currently there are 101 wellbeing objectives set across the 19 PSBs, ranging from two in Gwynedd and Isle of Anglesey to 15 in Wrexham. There are also 462 underlying supporting steps and actions to deliver the 101 wellbeing objectives. The 101 wellbeing objectives ‘best fit’ with seven national wellbeing goals are as follows:



**A globally responsible Wales** – 12 wellbeing objectives



**A prosperous Wales** – 12 wellbeing objectives



**A resilient Wales** – six wellbeing objectives



**A healthier Wales** – 25 wellbeing objectives



**A more equal Wales** – 12 wellbeing objectives



**A Wales of cohesive communities** – 25 wellbeing objectives



**A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language** – four wellbeing objectives



**Others** – five wellbeing objectives (all focussed on ‘transformation’ of public services)

Image source: Office of Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

Source: Wales Audit Office

- 7 The Act also created a Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (the ‘Commissioner’). The general duties of the Commissioner are to ‘promote the sustainable development principle, in particular to act as a guardian of the ability of future generations to meet their needs and encourage public bodies to take greater account of the long-term impact of the things they do’. Specifically, the Commissioner is charged with monitoring and assessing the extent to which wellbeing objectives set by public bodies are being met<sup>1</sup>.
- 8 On behalf of the Auditor General for Wales, we have examined how PSBs are operating; looking at their membership, terms of reference, frequency and focus of meetings, alignment with other partnerships, resources and scrutiny arrangements. This is a phase one review on partnership working which will be followed up by a further report in 2020<sup>2</sup>. We have not reviewed wellbeing plans and assessments. [Appendix 1](#) sets out our audit methods, which included a survey of PSB members, a review of statutory guidance, PSB agendas, reports and minutes and interviews and focus groups with a range of PSB members and commentators. Our findings are also intended to help support the Welsh Government’s and Welsh Local Government Association’s current [review of strategic partnerships](#). Overall, we have concluded that **Public Services Boards are unlikely to realise their potential unless they are given freedom to work more flexibly and think and act differently.**

- 1 In 2017, the Commissioner provided each of the 19 PSBs with individual feedback on their draft wellbeing assessments. The Commissioner also published [Wellbeing in Wales: Planning today for a better tomorrow](#), a review summarising key issues for public bodies to learn from the initial 2017 wellbeing assessments.
- 2 The Phase Two review will look at the complexity of partnership delivery looking at a distinct group in society with multifaceted problems/needs who call on and access a range of different public bodies at different times to ascertain how organisations are working differently to address these needs. Our tracer is rough sleepers, a group in society with often intractable problems, who regularly call on and frequently use a wide range of public services and are challenging to provide services for because of their vulnerability, circumstances and lifestyle. This analysis will focus on determining if partners are genuinely working jointly to deliver improvement and whether public bodies are collectively taking decisions, using resources and prioritising activity to actually deliver change.

## Public bodies have not taken the opportunity to effectively organise, resource and integrate the work of PSBs

- 9 Whilst PSBs are building on the work of Local Service Boards and generally have the right membership, some key partners are not actively involved, and irregular attendance and lack of engagement restrict progress. Most PSBs are clear on their remit, adopting the model terms of reference set out in the Act. The focus of PSB work varies widely, a reflection of local circumstances and priorities. However, Welsh Government guidance on impact assessments is not being used consistently. The advice provided by the Future Generations Commissioner is not always valued or acted on. The lack of dedicated funding is seen as limiting the potential of PSBs to make a positive and lasting impact on Welsh communities.

## PSBs are not being consistently scrutinised or held to account

- 10 PSBs are not taking the opportunity to tell people what they are doing and develop a shared view of what needs to improve. Whilst some PSBs are providing a supportive space for reflection and self-analysis, they are not yet enhancing democratic accountability nor improving transparency. Public involvement and scrutiny arrangements are too inconsistent and variable to ensure that scrutiny of PSBs fully meets the expectations of the Welsh Government's guidance. Despite some positive and effective work to embed and make scrutiny truly effective, more work is required to ensure a consistent level of performance and impact.

## Despite public bodies valuing PSBs, there is no agreement on how their role should operate now or in the future

- 11 There is no single or right model for how PSBs should be organised and should work. Each will reflect the context of its area, the focus of Board members and their priorities for action. Nonetheless, public bodies working across regions find it challenging to participate in numerous Boards and there remains overlap between the PSBs and the work and membership of other partnerships, in particular the Regional Partnership Boards. However, opportunities for reducing duplication are not being taken. Some partners are concerned that fewer, larger PSBs will limit the focus on communities and make accountability and decision making too distant from citizens.

- 12 Comparatively, PSBs have more in common with Community Planning Partnerships in Scotland but do not deliver projects and co-ordinate funding programmes like their Scottish counterparts. Strategic partnership work in England is left to each council to determine. English councils are focusing on strategically using land-use planning power, the General Power of Competence and the ability to negotiate reuse of income generated from flexing business rates to encourage growth that helps tackle problems. In both Scotland and England there is more focus on partnerships 'doing'.

## Recommendations

- 13 Our recommendations are intended to help support the PSB members and the Welsh Government to improve the operation, effectiveness and impact of PSBs.

### Exhibit 2: recommendations

Recommendations	
<b>R1</b>	<p>In <b>Part 1</b> of the report we set out that understanding the impact of choices and decisions requires public bodies to fully involve citizens and stakeholders and undertake comprehensive Impact Assessments. However, we found that current practice is insufficient to provide assurance that the needs of people with protected characteristics are fully considered when reviewing choices and the voice of citizens is not sufficiently influencing decisions. <b>We recommend that PSBs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>conduct formal assessments to identify the potential impact on people with protected characteristics and the Welsh language and review agreed actions to ensure any adverse impacts are addressed;</b></li><li>• <b>improve transparency and accountability by making PSB meetings, agendas, papers and minutes accessible and available to the public;</b></li><li>• <b>strengthen involvement by working to the guidance in the <a href="#">National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales</a>; and</b></li><li>• <b>feed back the outcome of involvement activity identifying where changes are made as a result of the input of citizens and stakeholders.</b></li></ul>
<b>R2</b>	<p>In <b>Part 2</b> of the report we review arrangements for PSB scrutiny and conclude that there are shortcomings and weaknesses in current performance and practice. <b>To improve scrutiny, we recommend that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>PSBs and public bodies use the findings of the Auditor General for Wales' <a href="#">Discussion Paper: Six themes to help make scrutiny 'Fit for the Future'</a> to review their current performance and identify where they need to strengthen oversight arrangements and activity; and</b></li><li>• <b>PSBs ensure scrutiny committees have adequate engagement with a wider range of relevant stakeholders who can help hold PSBs to account.</b></li></ul>

## Recommendations

- R3** In **Part 3** of the report we summarise the difficulty of developing, implementing and resourcing PSBs and the challenges of managing multiple partnerships that can often have overlap and duplication. **To help build capacity, consistency and resourcing of activity we recommend that:**
- **PSBs take the opportunity to discharge other plan and strategy obligations through the Local Wellbeing Plan;**
  - **the Welsh Government enables PSBs to develop flexible models of working including:**
    - merging, reducing and integrating their work with other forums such as Regional Partnership Boards; and
    - giving PSBs flexibility to receive, manage and spend grant monies subject to PSBs ensuring they have adequate safeguards and appropriate systems in place for management of funding; effective budget and grant programme controls; and public reporting, scrutiny and oversight systems to manage expenditure.
- R4** **To help build capacity, consistency and resourcing of activity we recommend that the Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government Association in their review of strategic partnerships take account of, and explore, the findings of this review.**

## Part 1

Public bodies have not always taken the opportunity to effectively organise and resource the work of PSBs



- 1.1 **Shared Purpose Shared Future – Collective role: Public Services Boards** explains the Act and the work of PSBs, identifying council boundaries as the principle basis for joint working. The guidance also sets out how PSBs can merge, should collaborate to widen coverage and encourages them to operate more efficiently by providing them with the opportunity to discharge other planning and strategy reporting duties through the work of the PSB. In this part of the report we look at the evolution of PSBs and how they are meeting the expectations of the Welsh Government. We also consider their membership, focus, resourcing, operation and the evolution of PSBs from their forerunner bodies, Local Service Boards.

### **PSBs are building on the work of Local Service Boards and generally have the right membership, but attendance at meetings fluctuates and some key stakeholders are not always involved**

- 1.2 The Welsh Government's Making the Connections: Delivering Beyond Boundaries published in 2006, created Local Service Boards (LSBs) within each council area. Like PSBs, LSBs were intended 'to bring together the key contributors to local service delivery, both devolved and non-devolved'<sup>3</sup> to improve co-operation in service planning and undertake joint action where the need is identified, and where good outcomes depend on joined-up action. The intention was for the LSBs to be an over-arching mechanism of co-ordination, bringing together the main public service providers – councils, local health boards, police, the fire and rescue services and the Welsh Government itself.
- 1.3 Whilst the work and focus of LSBs naturally evolved over their life, partly tailored by the expectations and requirements of revised guidance<sup>4</sup>, they were the key forerunner to PSBs. From our review we found that many PSBs have evolved from the LSBs, building upon the foundations of the previous partnerships (for instance, Ceredigion<sup>5</sup> and Merthyr Tydfil<sup>6</sup>). In many cases the same individuals have moved from LSBs to PSBs continuing to deliver broadly the same role with the same responsibilities.

3 Welsh Assembly Government, **Making the Connections - Delivering Beyond Boundaries: Transforming Public Services in Wales**, – page 3, November 2006.

4 For example, Shared Purpose, **Shared Delivery: Guidance on Integrating Partnerships and Plans**, December 2012.

5 [http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/cpd/CeredigionStrategicPartnerships\\_Public/13.5.1-EstablishmentOfCeredigionPSB.pdf](http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/cpd/CeredigionStrategicPartnerships_Public/13.5.1-EstablishmentOfCeredigionPSB.pdf)

6 <https://democracy.merthyr.gov.uk/documents/s31707/Committee%20Report.pdf>

1.4 Most PSBs are chaired by council representatives: three by council chief executives and ten by council leaders. Of the other PSBs, two are chaired by the local health board representative, two by the chief executives of a local national park and two rotate the chairing between statutory partners. In addition to the statutory members the public bodies most frequently invited to PSB meetings are the Welsh Government, the police, probation services, national parks and representatives of the local voluntary sector. **Exhibit 3** summarises the main attendees across the 19 PSBs and the frequency of their attendance at meetings.

### Exhibit 3: frequency of attendance of PSB members

There is a wide variation in attendance across the 19 PSBs from statutory members and statutory invitees ranging from below 50% to 100% on individual PSBs.

PSB members	Status	Lead attended	Deputies attended	No attendance
Council leader	Statutory members	52%	33%	15%
Senior council officers	Statutory members	64%	28%	8%
Fire and rescue authority	Statutory members	54%	46%	-
Health board	Statutory members	52%	45%	3%
Natural Resources Wales	Statutory members	61%	34%	5%
Welsh Government	Statutory invitees	47%	13%	40%
Chief constable	Statutory invitees	45%	44%	11%
Police and crime commissioner	Statutory invitees	30%	28%	42%
Probation	Statutory invitees	25%	25%	50%

PSB members	Status	Lead attended	Deputies attended	No attendance
Community rehabilitation company	Statutory invitees	24%	8%	68%
National parks	Invitees	81%	-	19%
Voluntary sector representative	Statutory invitees	77%	-	23%

Source: Wales Audit Office review of minutes for PSB meetings

- 1.5 **Exhibit 2** highlights that all statutory partners across all PSBs frequently send deputies, particularly health boards and fire and rescue authorities, who tend to be represented by area directors or area managers rather than chief executives or chief finance officers. The lack of continuity in attendance and frequency of substitutions is regularly flagged as reducing the effectiveness of PSBs.
- 1.6 For instance, one respondent to our call for evidence commented that ‘while the Act is quite prescriptive with regards to the seniority of individuals required to sit on the Board, replacements or substitutes are still fairly common. The PSB only meets five times a year and inconsistency in representation means that it is difficult to create momentum in terms of delivering a shared vision and purpose.’ Another noted that it was critical that the PSB had ‘a focus on ensuring all partners who attend see the value of their role in the PSB, some attend without adding the value required, without actively supporting’ and another that ‘the Boards are variable and depend very much on the dynamic amongst the organisations who attend. Unless senior members of participating organisations attend, they [the Board] very quickly run out of steam.’

- 1.7 Despite all PSBs having voluntary sector representation, county voluntary councils' and Wales Council for Voluntary Alliance members report that the work of PSBs feels very distant from the reality of the day to day work of third sector organisations. The culture of PSBs also feels like a local authority owned agenda, notably in areas where the number of local authority representatives outweighs that of other organisations. They conclude that 'the current balance of power is reflective of the status quo, a 'two-tier' system with a clear onus on the four statutory partners versus the 'other' members; resulting in weak collective ownership of the work'<sup>7</sup>.
- 1.8 PSBs also invite a wide range of other organisations to participate in and shape their work. For example, further or higher education institutions and housing associations. We found that only three PSBs have regular attendance from town and community councils – Neath Port Talbot, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan – and only one PSB (Swansea) has a good level of involvement with the private sector through the Regional Business Forum. No faith groups are involved in the work of PSBs despite their value being recognised in wellbeing assessments.

### PSBs are engaging with citizens, but are not involving them in their work

- 1.9 The legislation makes it clear that PSBs should work in a citizen-centred way, involving citizens in the co-design and delivery of wellbeing plans. PSBs have undertaken extensive stakeholder engagement activity when developing and finalising their wellbeing objectives and the Local Wellbeing Plan. For instance, questionnaire surveys in Ceredigion, Caerphilly, Pembrokeshire, Torfaen, Neath Port Talbot, the Vale of Glamorgan and Newport; and public engagement sessions and workshops in designated 'community areas' in Gwynedd and Anglesey, Bridgend, Cardiff, Neath Port Talbot, Monmouthshire, Swansea, Flintshire, Conwy and Denbighshire.

<sup>7</sup> Submission from Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW) to the National Assembly for Wales' Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee – inquiry in relation to Public Services Boards, May 2018.

- 1.10 Other notable examples of engagement include the refocusing of citizens<sup>8</sup> panels onto PSB activity such as the Blaenau Gwent Citizens Panel, Your Voice Wrexham, Involve Newport and the Torfaen People’s Panel. The Torfaen Consultation Hub helps the public find and participate in consultations run by all public service organisations in Torfaen. And the One Cwm Taf newsletter<sup>9</sup> and One Newport bulletin<sup>10</sup> are good examples of how PSBs are informing people about what is going on, inviting comment, and promoting volunteering.
- 1.11 Whilst engagement activity has been time consuming and extensive it has nonetheless tended to follow traditional approaches focussed on informing rather than involving people and consequently falls short of meeting the new expectations of the Act. For example, it is unclear how such activity has been used to shape PSB priorities, the final wellbeing objectives and the actions needed to deliver change. Similarly, stakeholders are not made aware of the impact of their contribution and we found little evidence of how PSBs are ensuring the full diversity of stakeholders are represented and take part in involvement and engagement activity. For instance, we found that only Bridgend PSB has specifically engaged with and sought to involve people with protected characteristics. Engagement activity across Wales has only occurred in English or Welsh, and not in other languages or by using British Sign Language (BSL). We conclude that PSBs are not consistently involving people who have the most to gain from public bodies taking a stronger focus on improving citizens’ lives.

8 A Citizens’ Panel aims to be a representative, consultative body of local residents. It is typically used by statutory agencies, particularly local authorities and their partners, to identify local priorities and to consult service users and non-users on specific issues.

9 <http://www.ourcwmtaf.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=286&mid=613&fileid=403>

10 <http://www.newport.gov.uk/oneNewport/News/One-Newport-Bulletin.aspx>

## Most PSBs have adopted the Terms of Reference set out in the Act

- 1.12 Terms of reference define the purpose and structures of the PSB and are the basis for partners agreeing to work together to accomplish a shared goal. Good terms of reference will set out the governance, functions and ambitions of the PSB and will highlight how partners and the public will be involved. They will also provide a documented basis for making future decisions because they define the:
- a vision, objectives, scope and deliverables (ie what has to be achieved);
  - b stakeholders, roles and responsibilities (ie who will take part in it);
  - c resource, financial and quality plans (ie how it will be achieved); and
  - d work breakdown structure and schedule (ie when it will be achieved).
- 1.13 Whilst the Welsh Government encourages local flexibility, we found that 17 of the 19 PSBs have adopted terms of reference in line with the Act, but with little variation to take account of local circumstances. Whilst nearly all terms of reference follow the same format, we found that six do not set out how sub and working groups will be established and operate and five do not set out how people and partners will be engaged in the work of the PSB. Resources, capacity building and skills development are the major gaps in the current terms of reference. Cardiff, Caerphilly and Newport PSBs have updated their terms of reference and Swansea PSB has produced some good guidance to support the work of the PSB. The terms of reference developed by Gwynedd and the Isle of Anglesey helpfully sets out and explains how disagreement and conflict will be resolved.

## PSB agendas vary widely and Welsh Government guidance on impact assessments is not sufficiently clear to direct activity in key areas

- 1.14 Decisions made in PSB meetings ultimately determine the success or failure of the PSB, but meetings can often run the risk of being unfocused and unproductive if they do not have a clear agenda. From our review of minutes and agendas we found that the coverage of agendas, quality of reports and the minutes are hugely variable. Between April 2016 and July 2019, we identified from PSB and council websites that PSBs have met a total of 208 times. We were, however, unable to find public information on dates of meetings, agendas, minutes and reports for 11 PSBs for some or all of this period. Indeed, two PSBs have not reported publicly on when they have met, nor have they published agendas, board papers and minutes of meetings since April 2016.
- 1.15 Whilst we only have a partial picture of PSB performance, we found that as of June 2019:
- a PSBs had, on average, 18 core attendees at each meeting, with the number of participants ranging from 16 to 42 people;
  - b the average length of meetings is 2.5 hours;
  - c PSBs have received over 1,100 reports and over 300 formal presentations as well as regular verbal updates and tabled items;
  - d 'host' councils are allocated approximately 98% of the tasks for action arising from meetings; and
  - e each PSB has on average four sub-groups ranging from no sub-groups in four PSBs to 11 in one.

- 1.16 Too often reports and minutes are not clearly written and are full of jargon which can make it difficult for the public to judge the quality of decision making and the work of PSBs. Conclusions of discussions often end in the Board ‘noting’ items, or ‘thanking’ partners for contributions, and agendas regularly include matters for information not decision. And, because these tend not to be matters for action they are consequently not monitored or scrutinised in later PSB meetings. One respondent to our call for evidence noted from their experience ‘the PSB has also become a bit of a ‘catch all’ for initiatives. Agendas have become long and discussion time limited.’ Overall, we conclude that PSBs are not doing enough to report publicly and openly on their work to ensure stakeholders and citizens can judge performance and hold them to account. This weakens transparency and accountability and it is difficult to see how public bodies are collectively taking a stronger focus on improving local citizens’ lives in line with national guidance and public interest.
- 1.17 We found that Welsh Government guidance<sup>11</sup> is also not clear on whether PSBs should undertake impact assessments, noting that ‘a public services board is not under a duty to carry out formal impact assessments. However, they might consider it a useful way of reflecting on matters that statutory members of the board would need to consider or expect to be considering in any case if they are to meaningfully assess the well-being of their area.’ Consequently, PSBs have adopted a variety of approaches to gauge and understand the potential impact of their decisions. For instance, whilst some Boards have undertaken PSB specific impact assessments, others rely on individual organisations’ impact assessments. These are, however, often not specific to the PSBs’ priorities or planned actions and can be unsighted by other Board members.
- 1.18 More generally, respondents to our call for evidence flag concerns with Welsh Government guidance and advice, perceiving it as overly bureaucratic, too prescriptive and not being sufficiently integrated with other key partnership guidance, in particular Regional Partnership Boards. For instance, one noted that ‘the legislation has been very prescriptive, and it has delayed the start of work on projects. Early discussions focussed on dates when things had to be done by and perversely dates things couldn’t be started until a time lapse had occurred.’ Another commentator noted that to support the PSBs to flourish requires ‘less nationally imposed demands and expectations; less central generated bureaucracy’ and another that PSBs should have ‘greater flexibility to enable the PSB to focus on initiatives rather than compliance with the guidance’.

11 <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-02/spsf-3-collective-role-public-services-boards.pdf>

## PSBs have mixed views on the benefits of the advice they receive from the Future Generations Commissioner

- 1.19 The Future Generations Commissioner has clearly set out to PSBs the expectation that their work should be focussed on specific issues, where the PSB is more likely to make transformative changes that can help improve people's wellbeing. Indeed, the Commissioner has asked PSBs to consider focussing more deeply on a small number of issues and to consider different ways of tackling issues rather than continuing with some of the more traditional approaches which have not proved successful in the past.
- 1.20 The Commissioner has also made clear that part of her role is 'continuing the conversation' and in 2016-17 sent letters of advice to PSBs in response to their wellbeing assessments, which culminated in her national report **Well-being in Wales: planning today for a better tomorrow**. The Commissioner also provided advice to PSBs on their draft wellbeing objectives in 2017-18, as PSBs were preparing their wellbeing plans.
- 1.21 We found that PSBs are responding very differently to this advice. Some PSBs, such as Ceredigion, Cwm Taf and Pembrokeshire, have evidently reviewed the advice – for instance, the Commissioner's 'Art of the Possible'<sup>12</sup> programme – and PSB partners have considered collectively how they can best use these insights to refine their work. Despite respecting the advice and guidance provided by the Commissioner and her office, minutes of some PSBs' meetings note that the length and timeliness of advice could be better and that it is often viewed as impractical and not helpful in supporting the PSB to improve.
- 1.22 For instance, minutes of the Newport PSB meeting of 21 November 2017 note that 'Members commented that the Commissioner's advice was overly lengthy and could usefully have provided a clearer steer on expectations and guidance models for the PSB in terms of how it could do things differently.'<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the Wrexham PSB meeting of 13 September 2018 noted that '[the commissioner] is asking PSBs to consider the governance between themselves and the RPBs. PSB felt advice is badly timed to consider this in detail at the moment'.<sup>14</sup> These are echoed by responses to our call for evidence, with feedback from one PSB member noting that the 'idealist expectations of the Future Generations Commissioner' hinder the work of the PSB.

<sup>12</sup> The 'Art of the Possible' is one of the Commissioner's main programmes of work. It is a partnership approach to shining a light on great work that is improving wellbeing in communities across Wales.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.newport.gov.uk/documents/One-Newport/PSB-Minutes-21-November-2017.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.wrexhampsb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/WrexhamPSB-13-09-18-mins.pdf>

## The lack of dedicated funding limits the work and impact of PSBs

- 1.23 The Act requires councils to make administrative support available to the PSB – ensuring the board is established and meets regularly; preparing the agenda and commissioning papers for meetings; inviting participants and managing attendance; work on the annual report and preparation of evidence for scrutiny. However, it is for each board to determine appropriate and proportionate resourcing of their collective functions which are the responsibility of all the statutory members equally.
- 1.24 The main source of ‘income’ for PSBs is the Welsh Government’s Regional Grant which is issued on a health board footprint and must be spent for the benefit of all PSBs within that region and cannot be spent on project work. We found that some PSBs have set budgets. Cwm Taf PSB has a pooled budget to support administrative work with contributions from the councils and health board. Similarly, both the councils and health board members of the Neath Port Talbot and Swansea PSBs each contribute £10,000 to cover the cost of administrative support. A number of PSBs are also seeking to align their work with other partnership groups in order to share grant funding.
- 1.25 Outside of this funding, the majority of partners’ contribution to the PSBs is a ‘contribution in kind’, usually officer time and use of facilities with most expenditure being absorbed by each partner, in particular the council. This is particularly challenging for councils as they are required to service the PSB and deliver the scrutiny role which goes wider than providing support for meetings. However, it is clear that partners also do not have the capacity to take on more and resources and capacity remain a key risk. Indeed, one of the key messages from our call for evidence is in relation to resources, capacity and the need for a dedicated funding stream for PSBs.

Call for evidence feedback on major risks facing the PSB:

'The main barriers relate to issues of resources and capacity.'

'In order for the PSB to begin fulfilling its potential, it needs dedicated funding. Crucially, this needs to be allocated to the PSB ... not just the local authority or the statutory partners. The allocation of shared resource to RPBs in the form of ICF & transformation fund has galvanised multi-agency, cross-sector collaboration.'

'Provide access to financial support – all partners are financially stretched and even if collaboration opportunities are identified there are still set up costs and a need for staff support.'



'Dedicated funding, resources and improved clarity around expectations of PSBs relative to other collaborations would improve impact.'

'The lack of direct financial resources prevents some actions being undertaken – the time and effort required to look at pooled/shared budgets is disproportionate to any success. WG should ensure that some of the funding streams are directed to PSB - ICF, Transformation funds etc. This would help recognise the role of PSB and speed up change and reconfiguration of services.'

'Over the past three years, the local authority has allocated significant resource to ensure the effective operation of the PSB. This is a significant burden which is not sustainable in the long term.'

'PSBs receive no direct funding, this is a limiting factor. The capacity and capabilities of each partner vary so each partner contributes in very different ways. Inevitably those partners with the broadest shoulders carry the heaviest load which is an issue at a time of austerity when all organisations are under financial pressure and struggling with limited resources.'

'The main barriers relate to issues of resources and capacity across partner organisations: lack of dedicated PSB partnership resource budget; reduced capacity across senior managers in the public sector following 6 years of austerity; and lack of additional funding from Welsh Government to deliver on the requirements of the WBFGA, particularly in comparison to that made available to deliver the SSWBA.'



## Part 2

Public Services Boards are not consistently being scrutinised or held to account



- 2.1 The Act identifies that local councils are responsible for the formal overview and scrutiny of PSBs, and in particular the: provision of a supportive space for reflection and self-analysis; enhanced democratic accountability and improved transparency; a stronger focus on improving local citizens' lives; and place-based transformation through deeper public engagement. The three main roles of overview and scrutiny committees are set out in Welsh Government guidance and defined as:
- a reviewing the PSBs' governance arrangements;
  - b acting as statutory consultees on the wellbeing assessment and Local Wellbeing Plan; and
  - c monitoring progress on the PSBs' implementation of the Local Wellbeing Plan and engagement in the PSB planning cycle.
- 2.2 In order to ensure democratic accountability, councils must designate a scrutiny committee to review the governance arrangements of the PSB as well as review or scrutinise the decisions made, or actions taken by the PSB, and make reports or recommendations to the Board regarding its functions or governance arrangements. It is for each council to determine what form these scrutiny arrangements take. For example, existing legislative powers can be used to put in place joint arrangements, such as 'co-opting' persons who are not members of the authority to sit on the committee, and where appropriate to appoint joint committees across more than one local authority area. The committee can require any statutory member of the Board to give evidence, but only in respect of the exercise of joint functions conferred on them as a statutory member. This includes any person that has accepted an invitation to participate in the activity of the Board.
- 2.3 We found a wide variation in how councils have configured their PSB scrutiny functions. Five have a dedicated PSB scrutiny committee, five include oversight within the remit of a partnership scrutiny committee, and others have established reporting lines through policy and resources scrutiny committees. Swansea has the largest scrutiny committee inviting an average of 32 people to each meeting in 2018 and 2019. However, one council has not yet designated or created a scrutiny committee for the PSB and another has only recently created a scrutiny committee, which is yet to meet. Councils that have integrated the scrutiny of the PSB with other responsibilities often have committees with very broad remits and councillors lack the capacity to consider everything they need to. As a result, the work of the PSB can take a low priority.

- 2.4 The timing and frequency of meetings do not help scrutiny committees to monitor progress on the PSBs' implementation of the Local Wellbeing Plan. For instance, most scrutiny committees are not timetabling their meetings to mirror the cycle of PSB meetings. The frequency of council scrutiny committee meetings also varies widely, a reflection of whether oversight has been tasked to an existing committee or to a dedicated committee focussed purely on the PSB. Consequently, some scrutiny committees meet monthly, others less frequently.
- 2.5 Our review of council scrutiny papers, agendas and reports found that a number of committees are focussing on internal administration, structures and procedures and not enough on providing insight or challenge to PSBs. We saw evidence that most, but not all, scrutiny committees are consulted on the PSBs' wellbeing assessment and Local Wellbeing Plan, but it is not always clear what impact their scrutiny has had. Some scrutiny committees simply note receipt of the Local Wellbeing Plan with minutes recording no or little comment or challenge.
- 2.6 With regard to monitoring progress on the PSBs' implementation of the Local Wellbeing Plan and engagement in the PSB planning cycle, we found big differences in how scrutiny committees are performing. There is good evidence that some scrutiny committees are effectively challenging the work of PSBs. For example, the work of Cardiff Council's Policy Review and Performance scrutiny committee when considering the PSB's Wellbeing Report 2017-18<sup>15</sup>. Likewise, Caerphilly provide PSB performance reports to members in advance of scrutiny meetings to help members set their lines of enquiry and to ensure that the right PSB partner officers attend meetings to answer these questions. In addition, pre-meeting discussions also allow officers to present questions under themes to sharpen the focus of scrutiny.

<sup>15</sup> <http://cardiff.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s25545/Minutes%20Public%20Pack%2003102018%20Policy%20Review%20and%20Performance%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf>

- 2.7 However, these positive examples are not universal, and we found significant shortcomings in how some scrutiny committees are reviewing and scrutinising the decisions made and actions taken by PSBs. For instance, reports and updates on the work of PSBs are simply noted by some scrutiny committees, whilst other committees are not tracking the number, discussion of, discharge, and impact of the recommendations they make for PSBs to action. Scrutiny Committee papers and minutes can also be full of jargon and abbreviations which can make it difficult for councillors to examine performance, a point noted by Ceredigion's Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee<sup>16</sup>. This makes it difficult for councils to demonstrate how they are discharging the expectations of the Welsh Government's guidance.
- 2.8 Of the councils that published annual scrutiny reports, we found little commentary on their responsibilities to scrutinise PSB governance arrangements and whether the current systems are effective or need to change. The Terms of Reference of PSBs are generally not reviewed by scrutiny committees. This is important because PSBs' governance work may evolve over time and priorities may change.
- 2.9 Whilst some PSB scrutiny committees encourage wider attendance at meetings this could be more inclusive to ensure stakeholders and citizens are given the opportunity to hold their PSB to account. All PSB scrutiny committees are chaired by a councillor, membership of committees is primarily made up of local councillors and there are few co-opted members from PSB partners. Consequently, the work of committees ends up with a heavy 'council focus'. Many PSBs are not open to the public, and we found that only one PSB – Swansea – encourages involvement and engagement with the public at PSB meetings through its public 'question time'. In addition, Cardiff and Swansea tabled questions from the public. Cwm Taf and Cardiff advertise PSB and scrutiny meetings in the local press and on social media and several other PSBs have dedicated public-facing websites with a good range of useful and accessible information, the best of which we consider to be Cwm Taf and Blaenau Gwent. Websites with good quality material make it easy for the public to become more informed and involved in the work of the PSB. Despite these positive examples, there is more for PSBs and public bodies to do to ensure there is effective oversight of the work of Boards.

16 [http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/cpdl/CeredigionStrategicPartnerships\\_Public/10.8%20Scrutiny%20Feedback%2030.11.2017.pdf](http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/cpdl/CeredigionStrategicPartnerships_Public/10.8%20Scrutiny%20Feedback%2030.11.2017.pdf)

## Part 3

Despite public bodies valuing PSBs, there is no agreement on how their role should evolve



3.1 There is no single or right model for how PSBs should be organised and should work. Each PSB is the sum of its members and will reflect the local context, the needs of its areas and the agreed priorities for action. Since the establishment of Public Services Boards in 2016, much of the focus of their early work has been on completing the wellbeing assessment, adopting the Local Wellbeing Plan and establishing governance and operating arrangements between partners. Most PSBs have now reached a pivotal moment, where these arrangements are well-established and are turning their attention to delivering the outcomes they have set out. It is timely, therefore that PSBs pause and consider their role and how they can ensure their work is focussed sufficiently on meeting the objectives of the Act.

### Partners support the continuation of PSBs, but they have mixed views on what their future role should be

3.2 Nearly all partners responding to our call for evidence said that PSBs are the right vehicle to deliver the ambitions of the Act but also acknowledged they are only part of the solution. Whilst most partners note that PSBs will only have impact if they are allowed time and space to develop, many who responded to our call for evidence highlighted that structures also need to change to support them to flourish. Proposals included more flexibility to allow PSBs to operate without overly prescriptive guidance, exploring regional working and greater clarity over the roles and links between PSBs and Regional Partnership Boards.

'I would not want to see wholesale change being introduced again. We have had Community Planning and Leadership Partnerships and Community Plan; then the Local Service Board and Single Integrated Plan, and now we have Public Services Board and Wellbeing Plan. We cannot just keep shuffling the deck chairs, changing the name of partnerships, and expecting change for the better. I think most people are fed up with the 5-year cycle of change of partnership, new assessments, new plans and then 'all change' before anything has had chance to bed in and deliver real transformation and improvement. The Well-being of Future Generations Act needs us to plan for the long term – to do that, we need a long-term commitment to PSBs, even if an element of the work moves onto a regional footing.' – Call for evidence response.

- 3.3 PSB members often attend numerous partnerships and respondents to our Call for Evidence noted difficulties in aligning all priorities, and often the work of their organisation is remote and not central to delivery of wellbeing objectives or the Local Wellbeing Plan. This can be especially difficult for fire and rescue authorities who cover between four and nine PSBs; the national park authorities who work with between one and nine PSBs; and the police who operate across four and six PSBs. For example, one respondent to our call for evidence noted that ‘both Swansea and NPT PSBs have very similar wellbeing plans and yet these are being developed in parallel rather than in a collaborative joined up way which ignores local authority boundaries. This is a particular issue for partners who cover more than one PSB area – it duplicates work (attendance at numerous meetings discussing the same issues in different LA areas), it means missed opportunities for greater collaboration.’ Bodies working across a region consequently find it hard to resource every PSB meeting, sub group and council scrutiny meeting.
- 3.4 PSB members likewise find it challenging to respond to and align partnership activity under different pieces of legislation. As well as having to create PSBs, they are also required to form regional partnership boards under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and regional delivery arrangements under the recent Violence Against Women legislation. Reducing the complexity of public service governance has long been an aim of the Welsh Government, local government and other public service partners who note that the lack of alignment between partnerships which continue to operate on different geographical boundaries can dilute impact, stretch capacity and increase complexity. Partnerships undoubtedly can help drive transformational change, but the top-down prescriptive model favoured to date, coupled with different emphases in different legislation and guidance, has not always helped Public Bodies to deliver on the ground.
- 3.5 This is not unique to PSBs and echoes the findings of the Auditor General’s recent review on the Integrated Care Fund and the work of regional partnership boards<sup>17</sup>. For example, regional partnership boards operate on health-board boundaries, whereas others like the majority of PSBs operate on a local authority footprint. A number of respondents also highlighted that PSBs, unlike regional partnership boards, are not allocated resources to directly spend. This is resulting in some PSB partners choosing to prioritise the work of regional partnership boards over PSBs because the former makes decisions on where to invest and spend money and the latter does not.

17 <https://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/integrated-care-fund-report-eng.pdf>

- 3.6 However, given the weaknesses identified in earlier sections of this report on the inadequacy of accountability and oversight arrangements, the lack of public reporting and the duplication of PSB activity with other partnerships, there are risks in allocating PSBs resources to manage. For PSBs to start to control and spend money will require changes and improvements in how PSBs work; how they publicly report; how they are scrutinised and held to account; and clear expectations on how they should manage and control PSB budgets and expenditure.
- 3.7 It is unsurprising that many we have spoken to and who responded to our call for evidence flag the current multifaceted partnership environment as a potential block to improvement because resources and capacity are being overextended. It is often the same individuals who are expected to contribute to and attend PSBs and regional partnership boards, putting considerable pressures on their time and resources. For instance, one respondent to our call for evidence noted that ‘the partnership landscape is now rather complex ..... the PSB has found it challenging to find an area where they can add value and not duplicate other areas’. Whilst another highlighted that ‘the capacity to service both PSB and RPB partnership arrangements is an issue. A single partnership arrangement would help to reduce duplication, ensure adequate officer support and provide clarity regarding governance and accountability.’
- 3.8 Finally, one respondent highlighted that ‘the relationship between PSBs, RPBs and other bodies (City Deal, APBs) is very confusing and makes for a cluttered landscape. It is difficult for professionals to understand – let alone the public we are supposed to serve. Competing cycles – most public sector organisations are funded annually; political terms are 4/5 years and yet PSBs are trying to develop solutions for the next generation – these factors work against each other.’
- 3.9 There are nevertheless mixed opinions on whether PSBs should operate on local or regional footprints and whether they should merge with other partnerships. Whilst there are tensions inherent in the existing structures, there are also challenges to changing them. Whilst larger partnerships offer economy of scale, they can also become remote moving decision making and prioritisation further away from communities. The Welsh Government is also clear that not all partnership structures do the same job. Some are about case management or operational delivery across services whilst others focus on developing a shared strategic perspective and it is not always possible, or desirable, to bring these together.

- 3.10 As well as PSBs, the Welsh Government<sup>18</sup> has identified 23 other major partnership groupings, broadly aligned with the following themes:
- a Economy and skills – 3
  - b Health and social care – 4
  - c Criminal justice and community safety – 8
  - d Children and young people – 3
  - e Housing – 4
  - f Other – 1
- 3.11 Though most of these emanate from, or are driven by, national requirements, how they are organised, managed and work is very much left to public bodies to determine, recognition that there is no one or right way for partnerships to organise themselves. And whilst some boards have ensured that the responsibilities of different regional and local boards are clearly defined and seek to keep duplication to a minimum, this is not universal. Even where there are opportunities to streamline the work of the PSB and discharge other plan and strategy obligations through the Local Wellbeing Plan, we found that PSBs are not necessarily taking them.
- 3.12 For example, whilst most councils discharge their community planning functions and priorities for child poverty through their PSBs, and others have taken the opportunity to integrate their community safety partnerships into a sub group of the PSB (Bridgend and Swansea for example), progress in other areas has been limited. Strategies relating to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence have mostly been regionalised and are not being discharged through the Local Wellbeing Plan.
- 3.13 Undoubtedly, those we have spoken to and who responded to our call for evidence value the work of PSBs, but there are very different views on how they should evolve. As noted above, some favour fewer Boards operating across wider regional areas whilst others value PSBs reflecting local authority footprints and being tied more closely to communities. Others want to see PSBs and regional partnership boards being merged to reduce duplication, not least in attendance, but to also better co-ordinate work on similar priorities. It is clear that there is no single model for partnership working and each partnership needs to reflect the local circumstances, priorities and context. And it is PSBs themselves who are best placed to decide when, where and how they wish to work together, and the Act is designed to ensure they have the flexibility to do so.

18 Paper 3 (Annexe A), Working Group on Local Government, Meeting 25 January 2019.

3.14 However, given the demands on public bodies to sustain and maintain so many partnership fora, there is a clear case for rationalising the current arrangements to free up capacity and reduce duplication. And the current review commissioned by the 'Working Group on Local Government' to map strategic partnerships<sup>19</sup> and make recommendations for rationalisation should address this. To assist in this process, in the remainder of this section we consider how similar partnerships operate in Scotland and England and highlight key differences with Wales.

### PSBs are broadly similar to Community Planning Partnerships in Scotland, but partners in Scotland also deliver projects and co-ordinate funding programmes

3.15 The approach in Wales is similar to the Community Planning<sup>20</sup> system in Scotland. Community planning is the process by which councils and other public bodies work together, with local communities, businesses and voluntary groups, to plan and deliver better services and improve the lives of people who live in Scotland. The [Local Government in Scotland Act 2003](#) provides the statutory basis for community planning. Community planning is led by Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs). There are 32 CPPs, covering each council area, which include representatives from the following:

- a **the council:** It has a statutory duty to 'initiate, facilitate and maintain' community planning. It is therefore responsible for taking the steps necessary to ensure community planning takes place.
- b **statutory partners:** NHS boards, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and regional transport partnerships.
- c **other partners:** These include other public bodies, further and higher education institutions, voluntary groups, community groups and business organisations.

19 <https://www.wlga.wales/review-of-strategic-partnerships-june-2019>

20 The Community Planning model has been in place for a number of years and was most recently refreshed with the [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#).

- 3.16 Unlike PSBs, CPPs are focused on delivering projects particularly at a community level. This work can include managing and assisting in asset transfer to community groups, working with communities to both build capacity and identify solutions and also investing in infrastructure and projects. For instance, the approach to involving communities in identifying and planning responses in Glasgow<sup>21</sup>. CPPs are also required to specifically consider how they can help contribute to poverty reduction and they must also assess the impact of their policy choices on people with protected characteristics. Importantly, CPPs must set out what public money is being spent locally and actively seek opportunities to reduce duplication, jointly bid for external finance and pool resources.
- 3.17 CPPs have also acted as the co-ordinating body for national funding programmes; for instance, the Early Years Change Fund established in 2011 as a partnership fund between the Scottish Government, local government and the NHS totalling £274.25 million in investment. The CPPs provide oversight and co-ordination for this programme<sup>22</sup>. Consequently, CPP plans, which have a 10-year timescale, are focussed on operational delivery as well as setting the overall strategic direction for an area. There are therefore some important differences between CPPs and PSBs, namely, the former works more closely with the business sector, has oversight of funding and supports delivery of community projects. This is very different to PSBs.

21 <https://www.glasgowcpp.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=19222>

22 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-community-planning-partnerships-cpps-early-years-change-fund-returns-9781786524355/pages/1/>

## Strategic partnership work in England is left to each council to determine and this has resulted in very different approaches

3.18 The approach in Wales and Scotland, however, is sharply different to England. Increasingly, councils in England are choosing not to have a local strategic partnership forum, partly a reflection of less central direction, austerity and the cost of servicing and maintaining these forums, but also because of difficulties in quantifying impact and the speed of decision making. From our research we found that approaches in England tend to focus on one key priority – learning and skills, economic growth, preventing poverty, or digital delivery. And because there are no central mandated approaches or requirements, public bodies are left to determine how they respond, which has resulted in very different approaches with little consistency between regions. For instance:

- a the Derbyshire Partnership Forum<sup>23</sup> is one of the few remaining local strategic partnerships in England and primarily focuses on preventing poverty in rural areas. The Forum brings together over 60 public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations who work together to improve the quality of life for the people of Derbyshire. The Derbyshire Partnership integrates seven other strategic partnerships and runs a data observatory. The Derbyshire Partnership Forum is currently carrying out a fundamental review of its governance arrangements to refocus its priorities on fewer things where there are gaps in conventional service delivery and to further integrate efforts, for example, in youth safety prevention work.
- b Newcastle City Council's Growing our City<sup>24</sup> is focussed on attracting and encouraging investment in the city to grow the economy and create a more sustainable Newcastle. Key to this is the programme of work being developed under the Newcastle City Deal<sup>25</sup>, which supports the creation of an Accelerated Development Zone in the Newcastle and Gateshead corridor which is allowing the Council to regenerate the city centre and tackle poverty. Alongside this is the life and science and healthcare work which has levered in over £1 billion in investment and the Council's partnership with Legal and General at the Helix site.

23 <https://www.derbyshirepartnership.gov.uk/home.aspx>

24 <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/our-city/growing-our-city>

25 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/406293/Newcastle-City-Deal-Paper.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/406293/Newcastle-City-Deal-Paper.pdf)

- c the Essex Online Partnership<sup>26</sup> is focusing on one key priority: to improve digital access, grow skills, and ensure all partners have access to the best integrated technology and data. The Partnership operates through a subscription model and is jointly led by Essex County Council and Essex Police. The partnership shares knowledge, resources and services to provide technology solutions, which support the business needs of each partner organisation and reduce the cost of their technology. Significantly, the partnership involves and includes networks of interest, schools and rural communities.
- d Southampton Connect is an independent partnership which brings together senior city representatives seeking to address the key challenges and opportunities for Southampton and working with the city's key partners to improve the outcomes of the people of Southampton<sup>27</sup>. Southampton Connect is chaired by the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce and is responsible for the delivery of the Southampton City Strategy which contains many of the features of a wellbeing assessment. Partners emphasise speed of action and ability to speak with one voice as clear tangible benefits. Rough sleeping is the partnership's current priority based on public interest and local concerns.

3.19 From our analysis, one of the key differences between England and Wales is the freedom English councils have to determine their direction and purpose and the role of the private sector to support strategic activity. With less public money available to invest in services and regeneration activity, we found that English councils are focusing on strategically using their powers – in particular land use planning, the General Power of Competence<sup>28</sup> (which currently does not exist in Wales) and the ability to negotiate reuse of income generated from flexing business rates – to encourage inward investment that helps tackle problems. This helps to increase employment and grow council tax revenues to reinvest in public services.

26 <http://www.eolp.info/>

27 <https://www.southampton.gov.uk/council-democracy/partnership-working/southampton-connect.aspx>

28 The Localism Act 2011 introduced the general power of competence in England which enables local authorities to do things an individual may generally do but anywhere in the UK or elsewhere. The power also allows authorities to do things for a commercial purpose or otherwise, for a charge or without a charge and without the need to demonstrate that it will benefit the authority, its area or citizens of the area. The general power of competence has extended the range of services which a local authority can lawfully provide.

- 3.20 However, because these approaches are negotiated and agreed by the UK government on a case by case basis, there is no uniformity between councils nor a core focus for action that all councils are prioritising. Councils are essentially left to ‘get on with it’ with little external support, oversight or challenge, which is inherently risky, especially when things go wrong. This is very different to the Welsh Government policy for PSBs, which promotes a ‘public sector led’ response to addressing challenges. Whilst the Welsh Government’s guidance references the private sector and businesses, they are not identified as core PSB members and their role and contribution to date in Wales are not as central to the work of PSBs, with one or two exceptions, which is different to England.
- 3.21 Some, but not all, of the approaches in England are also developed under the auspices of City and Growth Deals<sup>29</sup>. City Deals also operate in Wales and are an agreement between the UK and Welsh governments and a city or city region. It gives the city and its surrounding area certain powers and freedom to take charge and responsibility of decisions that affect their area. City and Growth Deals are focussed on stimulating economic growth across an area, but also tackling barriers by, for instance, improving transport connectivity; increasing skill levels; supporting people into work; supporting businesses; and deciding how public money should be spent. A Growth Deal is very similar in purpose but is less geographically restrictive.
- 3.22 There are currently two City Deals in Wales – the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal<sup>30</sup> and the Swansea Bay City Deal<sup>31</sup> – and proposals for development of Growth Deals in Mid Wales and North Wales. The local authority partners in each of the existing City Deals have established joint governance arrangements to oversee implementation of the deal. Given the potential City Deals have for making a positive impact on improving economic wellbeing it is important that their work is focused on delivering sustainable development in line with the Act, a key issue flagged by the Commissioner with public service leaders in correspondence<sup>32</sup>. Irrespective, they are also another major partnership that adds to what already is a complex picture of planning and delivery across the public sector.

29 City and Growth Deals have become one of the main tools for driving economic activity in the UK in recent years. A process that started with the major urban centres of England (outside London) has grown to include most of the large population centres across the UK. By their nature, these deals are unique to the area they spring from, and there is a great deal of variety in their scope and ambition.

30 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/508268/Cardiff\\_Capital\\_Region\\_City\\_Deal.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508268/Cardiff_Capital_Region_City_Deal.pdf)

31 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/611685/Swansea\\_City\\_Deal\\_-\\_English.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/611685/Swansea_City_Deal_-_English.pdf)

32 <https://futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/20161212-City-deal-FinalEng.pdf>

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – study methodology



# Appendix 1 – review methodology

## Review of literature

We have reviewed a wide range of documents and media, including:

- evidence submitted to the National Assembly for Wales' Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee inquiry in relation to Public Services Boards;
- examining national policy, statutory guidance and the Well-being of Future Generations Act guidance and legislation;
- examining all PSB meeting reports, minutes and online information from 2018 and 2019 and a sample of earlier documentation;
- checking PSB websites for accessibility and encouraging public involvement;
- reviewing financial information on PSBs;
- comparing public priorities in wellbeing assessments with wellbeing objectives;
- recording who attended PSB meetings and examining all PSB terms of reference where they exist;
- assessing if PSBs are streamlining their activity by integrating other statutory partnerships and plans/strategies;
- considering if PSBs are taking account of advice from the Future Generations Commissioner;
- reviewing all PSB related council scrutiny committee minutes, reports and annual reviews of scrutiny; and
- other relevant research and guidance from government, councils, CIPFA, and research bodies.

## Comparative research

We compared guidance and strategic partnership work in Wales with approaches in England and Scotland.

## Call for evidence

We undertook a call for evidence of all PSB statutory and invited members and received responses from 51 members of PSBs covering all 19 PSBs.

## Interviews and focus groups

We interviewed representatives from the Future Generations Commissioners (FGC) Office, the Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and members of PSBs including council, fire and rescue authority, police and voluntary sector officers and PSB co-ordinators. We interviewed officers in councils in England and undertook fieldwork in Newcastle. We held focus groups with Wales Audit Office staff who are delivering Well-being of Future Generations audits at each of the 44 public bodies and have observed scrutiny meetings.

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