

On behalf of the Colin Everett, Chief Executive, Flintshire County Council, please find responses below to the six questions regarding the implementation of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act, ahead of the PAC panels taking place in January 2021:

1. Awareness and understanding of the Act and its implications.

There has been a steady and growing awareness of the Act and its implications although there was a feeling that we had been implementing an approach similar to the 5 Ways of Working, since the start of austerity. We developed and implemented Efficiency Plans to protect and where possible improve services for our future generations. We have numerous examples of where we have protected (and enhanced) services such as libraries, leisure centres, social service provision etc by reviewing our models of delivery through innovative and strategic long term planning.

Both Council members and our workforce have been increasingly aware of the Act and its implications – there have been awareness raising workshops and the increasing inclusion of the elements of the Act in how we work, present committee reports and identify case studies.

2. The resources available to public bodies to implement the Act and how effectively they have been deployed.

No additional resources have been provided to implement the Act. The additional requirements have been subsumed within our existing structures and budgets, but at times feel burdensome for the outcome to be gained. The Act encourages public bodies to behave in an “ideal world” – with multi year sustainable budget settlements, capacity for research and application, lack of bureaucracy and perfect partnership arrangements. This is not reality and it takes effort to either develop and/or campaign/lobby for these ideals.

3. Support provided to public bodies by the Future Generations Commissioner.

Support provided by the Future Generation’s Commissioner’s Office is sporadic, instructional and does not always benefit from direct experience of the realities of service delivery. Lack of collaboration with those who need to implement the Act needs improving ie: consideration of our statutory timescales; provision of a forward work programme (worked through collaboratively) and; sharing of best practice in a constructive and timely manner.

4. The leadership role of the Welsh Government.

Welsh Government appeared to be ‘lagging behind’ the other public bodies in relation to implementation of the Act; still working in silos, lack of cross-policy development, lack of clear ambition and objectives in which to be explicit about the 5 ways of working, too much focus on the 7 goals of well-being. An example is the carbon neutral target for 2030 which provides a strong and clear ambition but is not explicit about the 5 ways of working to achieve it.

5. Any other barriers to successful implementation of the Act (e.g. Brexit, COVID, etc.).

The pandemic has created opportunities as well as risks. The strong partnership that we have in North Wales across our public and third sector bodies (and increasingly our public sector partners) has strengthened further as a result of the pandemic and the trust that we have in each other. This provides increased opportunities for future working across our sectors in implementing the Act, both as bodies in our own right, but increasingly by working together to consider and create collaborative solutions. An example of this is the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and the joint Flintshire and Wrexham PSB which has collaborated specifically for Community Recovery/Resilience.

Barriers to implementation however are harboured by a lack of consideration of the statutory requirements that public bodies already have and the sudden and untimely requests for information and ‘toolkit responses’ when the organisations are already heavily involved in budget planning or

strategy setting. Additional barriers include the Welsh Government annual financial settlements which do not provide certainty for longer term planning plus last minute grant offers which are onerous in evidencing.

In addition, new responsibilities such as those contained within the Local Government and Elections Bill appear to be silent on the requirements of the Act. One of the responsibilities within this Bill is the requirement for greater and more evidenced consultation. Obviously Covid will require us to develop new and innovative approaches

In terms of Brexit, Wales as a whole has limited understanding on what this means for our communities and in particular our economy.

The Act only applies to the public sector bodies; a consideration of its applicability to third and private sector organisations would assist our partnership and collaborative working.

6. How to ensure that the Act is implemented successfully in the future.

Support to the public bodies needs to develop with clear, collaboratively designed expectations. There is a need to lessen the requirements for 'evidencing' the 5 ways of working and 7 goals which are over and above our statutory obligations. Our narratives – through protected and improved services will do this.

The Commissioners (e.g. Children, Welsh Language etc) need to work together to establish a clear strategy and pathway which we can build into our longer term plans.

Given the strong collaboration and relationships across the North Wales public sector, a strengthening of relationships between us and the Future Generations Office if they were to allocate a regional 'link' officer. This could assist with understanding our statutory requirements and their timing, the work that is being undertaken regionally to develop and strengthen services and develop a collaborative forward work programme which is both supportive and directional.

Good practice needs to be shared in an easily digestible and accessible format – there have been too many versions of long, academically, idealistically-led reports, which are dense and unfathomable. Clear direction of expectation is needed.