

National Assembly for Wales

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

CELG(4) LGC 03

Inquiry into Progress with local government collaboration

Response from : Ceredigion County Council



1. Ceredigion County Council has and continues to be actively engaged in collaboration and generally, public services are sufficiently mature to know that we cannot afford to duplicate and are continuing to work together to eliminate such duplication, to improve services and provide efficiencies. The creation of Local Service Boards (LSBs) and Regional Collaborative Boards have created further opportunities for collaboration both locally and at a regional level.
2. At a local level, the development of the Local Service Board has provided a particular focus for cross public sector joint working in the interests of local service delivery and in response to the needs of local citizens. The Local Service Board is led and facilitated by the Local Authority, which builds on arrangements that have been in place for a number of years, through partnerships dealing with health and wellbeing, children and young people, community safety, economic development, bilingual future and anti-poverty.
3. Locally, the Cylch Caron project is an example of innovative collaboration – working with Hywel Dda Health Board to develop an integrated health, social care and housing resource centre in Tregaron. Joint teams will be created to provide an integrated service provision to support those in the area to live independently.
4. Ceredigion County Council is involved in a number of good examples of regional collaboration projects which are demonstrating benefits:
5. Central Wales Infrastructure Collaboration Project (CWIC)
The Council embraced the ethos of the 'Simpson Report' and sought to collaborate with external partners and neighbouring Councils. Ceredigion County Council has, for example, set up an Engineering Consultancy (amongst others) and shares posts and resources with Powys County Council under the Central Wales Infrastructure Collaboration project (CWIC). This has benefited the internal users of the service and externally has allowed the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency (NMWTRA) to negotiate strategic and operational issues with one entity rather than both Councils split into four local areas. Other work and service areas are currently being worked on.

Benefits include:

- Cashable savings from shared posts for Ceredigion are estimated at £66,000 for 2012/13 and £21,500 for 2011/12

- Five new local jobs created: Four in Engineering Design and one Ecologist. This has also contributed to cost avoidance from less reliance on external consultants.
 - Service improvements, improved customer choice, cost avoidance and service resilience
 - Joint procurement and shared systems
 - Total quantifiable savings 2011 – 2013 £102,170.
6. Cathy Graham, UNISON Ceredigion Branch Secretary has stated that the CWIC project has been a “*stronger collaboration thanks to Union support*” and believes “*the project protects public sector jobs, keeps expertise in-house and therefore increases the Councils’ capability and capacity*”. (CWIC Bulletin, Issue 3, Autumn 2012)
7. Central Wales Waste Partnership (CWWP)
 This is another Shared Services initiative between Ceredigion and Powys County Councils. Since April 2010, the waste collaboration between Ceredigion and Powys County Councils has concentrated on procuring a long term sustainable treatment solution for the region’s food waste. A 15 year contract was awarded to Agrivert Ltd, one of the leading companies in the UK for processing food waste. From 1st November 2012, food waste collected by the two authorities is being transported to one of Agrivert’s existing Anaerobic Digestion (AD) facilities in Oxfordshire for treatment.

Benefits from the food waste treatment project include:

- Cashable savings – both authorities benefitted from reduced transport and treatment costs compared to the previous short term arrangements (between 20% -35% savings)
- Income – The project receives 25% revenue funding from the Welsh Government
- Income – Income sharing mechanism for the sale of products (digestate).
- Carbon savings – Estimated saving of 3,430 Tonnes of CO₂ (equivalent) per year.
- Cost avoidance – shared procurement costs across Ceredigion and Powys.
- Security – 15 year treatment capacity secured, very high level of recycling guaranteed.

8. Legal Shared Services

The purpose of the South West Wales Shared Legal Services partnership is to deliver a more efficient and robust legal service through closer collaboration to the benefit of the authorities individually and as a collective. The Partnership draws on existing expertise to share best practice, create ‘Centres of Excellence’ in the regional in specialist areas of law and to make use of ICT to work more effectively and efficiently.

The project aims to reduce the costs of external solicitors and will initially target an area of law with increasing demand and has demonstrated service improvements, including:

- Sharing of best practice in specialist areas of law through the thirteen SIGs (Special Interest Groups)

- More efficient and cost effective procurement of external advice through the Joint Procurement framework
- Increasing capacity in specialist areas of law.

9. Transforming Older Peoples' Services

This is funded by the Social Services Improvement Agency (SSIA) and is aimed at establishing a totally new way of working – to create a whole system approach to the delivery of services to older people in central Wales – across Health and Social Care (Ceredigion County Council, Powys County Council, Hywel Dda Health Board and Powys Teaching Health Board). There are four specific workstreams being developed:

- *Single Point of Access* – creating a common way of 'signposting' citizens to the most appropriate way to meet their needs. These will be staffed by health and social care professionals supported by the third sector and will be focussed on maximising independence and choice by keeping people out of social and health care services.
- *Targeted intervention* – a period of short term reablement or support to get over periods where circumstances have changed have shown to reduce referral to long term teams and free up stretched resources. These teams will be formed of health and social care staff, aimed at keeping people as independent in their own homes for as long as possible.
- *Planned Care and Support* – these staff, again from both health and social care will deal with those people who cannot be helped by short-term interventions. They could have the ability to cope independently with long-term help and support but may need more intense periods of intervention such as respite care or eventually residential or nursing home placements.
- *Quality Assurance, Performance, Policy and Procedures* – creating common systems across the 4 organisations wherever possible. This work will ensure robust governance arrangements and look to streamlining working practices wherever possible.

10. Education Regional Working (ERW)

This partnership aims to develop a consistent regional approach to school improvement by:

- Delivering more sustainable, efficient and robust services for the partnering authorities through closer collaboration
- Reviewing and, where possible, pursuing further effectiveness in shared service area
- The partnership is a vehicle to provide evidence of effective collaboration to Welsh Government via the School Standards Unit.

Ceredigion has shared its good practice in terms of school improvement with other Authorities in the region but is working more closely in the hub arrangement with Powys County Council.

11. Community Care Information System (CCIS)

This is a significant collaborative venture between Social Care and Health. Ceredigion officers are chairing both the CCIS Project Board and Project Team to deliver a single ICT System which will meet Social Services and Community Health requirements. In addition to the existing Welsh Systems Consortium of 8 Local Authorities who are working with NHS Wales organisations to jointly specify

and select a single solution which will support information sharing requirements, the project is open to include any of the other 14 Local Authorities across Wales who have agreed to be named in the procurement.

12. *Trafnidiaeth Canolbarth Cymru / Mid Wales Transportation (TraCC)*

This is a partnership between the three Mid Wales local authorities - Ceredigion County Council, Powys County Council and Gwynedd Council in relation to matters relating to transport. Established in 2003 with a Joint Committee, governance structure, decision-making and areas of delegated decision-making set out in Legal Agreement. This partnership has been successful in drawing down funding to improve services, share expertise and create service resilience across the region.

13. *North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency (NMWTRA)*

NMWTRA is based on a partnership of 8 Local Authorities – Anglesey, Ceredigion, Conwy, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, Flintshire, Powys and Wrexham – with many core services being bought-in from them. The Agency also procures works and services from private sector suppliers. NMWTRA is responsible on behalf of Welsh Government for managing:

- the trunk road network in 8 Local Authority areas – 65% of Wales in area
- 1,100 km (680 miles) of Trunk Road comprising 925 km (575 miles) of single carriageway and 175 km (105 miles) of dual carriageway
- over 2,000 structures
- a series of major tunnels on the A55
- the Traffic Management Control Room based at Conwy
- the Traffic Officer Service on the A55
- the A55 DBFO Contract across Anglesey.

14. *Public Protection*

Public Protection services across Wales work collaboratively to improve the safety of consumers. For example, implementation of the legislation pertaining to smoke-free work places and smoking in enclosed public places and introduction of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in partnership with the Food Standards Agency Wales.

15. Opportunities for further collaboration are always being considered and work is underway to develop joint working which involves a transformational way of working in local and regional resilience across the rural areas of Mid and West Wales in dealing with extreme weather events. This builds on the flooding experienced in the north of Ceredigion in 2012 where partner organisations worked together to support those in the affected communities – both in the immediate aftermath and in the recovery stage.

16. Further information in relation to Ceredigion County Council collaboration projects on the WLGA Collaboration Compendium:

<http://www.wlga.gov.uk/regional-collaboration-compendium-1>

17. *All Wales organisations*

Similar to other local authorities in Wales, Ceredigion is a member of various professional / technical organisations that undertake work on behalf of constituent

member authorities in order to avoid duplication and ensure consistency. Examples include the County Surveyors Society Wales and the Consortium of Local Authorities in Wales (CLAW) where all Welsh local authorities are members. Also, Ceredigion is a member of APSE (The Association for Public Service Excellence), which is an UK wide organisation.

By being members of the above professional / technical Groups a lot of research and work is already undertaken for local authorities. Some of the benefits of CLAW membership in relation to collaboration include savings in staff time leading to a value for money approach to the provision of property services, good practice guidance and exchange of ideas as well as opportunities for joint procurement initiatives for framework agreements with consultants and contractors. Moreover, Ceredigion has been successful in achieving CLAW National Awards for architectural excellence.

18. There is provision for joint scrutiny in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and as such, arrangements have been made with regard to the scrutiny of the Local Service Board, its Executive Groups and the delivery of the Single Integrated Plan by all partner organisations. However, the governance arrangements and accountability for collaboration, including scrutiny need to be improved across Wales.
19. However, there are examples of good governance in place within the region. There are Joint Committees as well as Collaboration Boards, which have delegated powers to Local Members as well as inter-Authority agreements. The CWIC project is an example of good practice in terms of governance. In addition, there is a Joint Trade Union Consultative Committee in place between Ceredigion and Powys, which acts as a high level forum to provide visibility of regional working and engagement with Trade Unions and any potential workforce issues arising from collaboration. The Joint Trade Union Consultative Committee between Ceredigion and Powys has been actively involved in the development of the regional work programme.
20. In addition, Scrutiny reviews to date have been based on information provided by the Council itself and its partners in the public and third sectors. A variety of sources have contributed to reviews including council departments, Hywel Dda Health Board, Age Concern, FUW, protest groups etc. Service users have provided evidence to some reviews - such as the meals at home service.
21. Ceredigion County Council has responded positively to the Welsh Government's call for increased collaboration over several years; but fundamentally, any collaborative projects must demonstrate benefits for the Council in terms of service resilience, efficiency savings, economies of scale, cost avoidance in addition to the opportunities of regional strategic planning, optimisation of external funding as well as the sharing of good practice.
22. The necessary investment of time and commitment to any regional shared service cannot be underestimated and the time it takes to achieve any benefits can be an obstacle. Member involvement and local accountability is critical for any successful collaboration.

