

## **WELSH PARLIAMENT PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

### **Barriers to the successful implementation of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

#### **Consultation response from Ceredigion County Council**

##### **Background**

In May 2020, the Auditor General for Wales and the Future Generations Commissioner published their statutory reports as required by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ("the Act"). The reports summarise the work that they have carried out under the Act between May 2017 and May 2020. The Senedd's Public Accounts Committee is undertaking an inquiry into these reports.

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

Broadly it is felt that Public Bodies have good awareness and understanding of the Act and its implications. It is felt however that awareness and understanding of the Act with the general public is not as advanced. Ceredigion County Council has held numerous workshops and training sessions for Elected Members and staff on the requirements of the Act and what it means in practice. A corporate working group has been established and all business planning, reporting and decision making tools are structured around the Sustainable Development Principle and National Well-being Goals.

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

No funding has been made available for Public Bodies to implement the Act. The Council has therefore used existing staff resources to raise awareness and understanding of the Act, as outlined above, along with utilising guidance documents and examples of best practice published by Welsh Government and The Future Generations Commissioner.

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

All the support provided by the Future Generations Commissioner to date has been welcome although some of the materials produced recently have been difficult to penetrate. There is a conflict between the enforcement element of the Commissioner's role and that of support, advice and engagement and it may be best placed for these to be separated in future. We would welcome more of a 'working together' mentoring role in moving forward.

##### **4. The leadership role of the Welsh Government.**

It is felt that Welsh Government departments are still working in silos and this needs to improve greatly before the Act can be truly embedded across the Public Service. The silo/departmental nature and short duration of Welsh Government grants don't provide an effective landscape for innovative approaches to long-term preventative work. The lack of integration of processes and legislation from Welsh Government impacts on our ability to plan for the long term.

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

Annual budget cycles, electoral cycles, pressures due to austerity and changes to public services make it difficult to think long-term. It is difficult to have the capacity to innovate when we are managing increasing demand. In addition, the way success is measured is not useful – this is mainly focused on short term outputs rather than longer term outcomes and prevention of problems. The requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 are a distraction. How can we concentrate and act for the long-term whilst being required to report annually in order to demonstrate measurable improvement. (Hopefully the Local Government Bill will clarify and improve the situation). It is challenging to get the balance right between accountability for delivering the Act and allowing space to deliver the changes required to truly implement it. In addition to the barriers outlined above, the current pandemic will result in more pressure being put on already very scarce resources. Some internal actions to further progress the integration of the Act into day to day practices that were planned for this year have been suspended due to staff being re-deployed to work on the Covid emergency.

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

Long-term funding for public bodies and Public Services Boards along with Welsh Government leadership are essential to ensure the success of the Act. The operating landscape is very complex therefore improvements to governance and infrastructure are needed. The way success is measured needs to shift from short term outputs to longer term outcomes and prevention of problems. Communication around the Act also needs to improve in order to assist with the wholesale behaviour change that's required before the Act can be successful in its long-term aspirations.