

PSB33

Dulliau gweithredu lleol ar gyfer lleihau tlodi:

Deddf Llesiant Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol a byrddau gwasanaethau cyhoeddus

Local Approaches to poverty reduction:

The Well-Being of Future Generations Act and public service boards

Ymateb gan: Castell – nedd Port Talbot

Response from: Neath Port Talbot



Date Dyddiad 15 June 2018
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John Griffiths AM
Chair
Equality, Local Government and
Communities Committee
National Assembly for Wales

BY EMAIL

Dear Chair,

I am responding to the request from your support staff (dated 13 June) for information on the relationship between our Public Service Board (PSB) and the Regional Partnership Board - known in these parts as Western Bay - established under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. The picture is a mixed one – perhaps best illustrated by a few examples.

Legislation has required two major pieces of work on a population assessment under the 2014 Act and the Well-being assessment required of the PSB under the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) Act 2015. However, it was pretty clear from the outset that the two had not been developed in a coherent way. There were different definitions/interpretations of “wellbeing” and, as we got into the process, “guidance” started to appear which further clouded matters by requiring domestic abuse, for example, to be included in the assessment

even though this was covered under separate legislation. In practical terms, the only way to resolve all this was to have a common group of people coordinating matters.

In terms of planning, we have been very clear in the PSB that we should not seek to duplicate work that is being done in the Western Bay context and elsewhere; but we have yet to entirely eliminate it. For example, the Western Bay Board has been looking to pull other matters into its remit such as Substance Misuse; but this area has its own governance arrangements and a much wider set of stakeholders. Thus the point is that there are inevitably rough edges around the interface of these partnerships, often driven by conflicting guidance and the desire of all parties to have their own priorities on the table. The Board has produced an Area Plan; but I am not convinced that it will drive the agenda for regional working across health and social care. The recent announcement from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services (“A Healthier Wales”) will move that debate in a different direction anyway and there has been little or no real debate in the Western Bay Board on these key issues as yet. It will be interesting to see whether that changes.

In terms of the links between the PSB and the regional boards more widely, some partners continue to argue for a regional footprint (often motivated by diary pressures and the prospect of fewer meetings – an objective for which I have much sympathy). I acknowledge that there are different views in different parts of Wales; but in our view, delivery on the Future Generations Act is likely to be as much local as it is regional or national. I would say that we have a good understanding locally and regionally of the different roles and responsibilities of the regional partnerships and the Public Service Board and the fact that some people are common to both partnerships assists in this.

Moving forward, I think it is inevitable (for a range of reasons – some listed above) that all the partnerships will need to evolve to meet national, regional and local agendas. However, I think it is equally important to pay attention to some other key factors including:

- Greater coherence of legislation (see above) and, if I may say so, better scrutiny of the costs of legislation. I could give a number of examples where initial assessments have claimed that legislation would either be cost neutral or even save money; but that has subsequently proved not to be the case – sometimes spectacularly so;
- The need for local authorities to deploy finite resources (human and financial) effectively. Put another way, this Council has lost a quarter of its staff and revenue budget since 2011. We do not have the capacity to waste on duplication; we need

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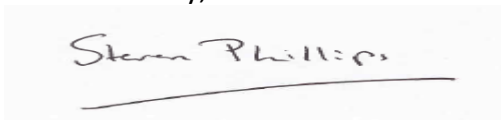
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less mandated partnerships, not more and a greater focus on outcomes; and

- A recognition that whilst partnership working has its place, ultimately the Council officers participating are responsible to our democratically Elected Members – not anyone else. Moreover, it is this Council that is (very largely) judged by regulators on the services we deliver - not amorphous partnerships covering wider geographical areas. The same applies to other partners – statutory or not. I do see the value of working together; but in the final analysis we have no authority over the budgets and operational decisions partner organisations (and vice versa). In my opinion, skating over this reality has been the biggest single weakness in the post-Beecham collaborative agenda pursued in Wales for the last decade or more. Whether this changes in the short/medium term may depend on what happens (or not) with local government reorganisation and, in our particular case, the transfer of the Bridgend area from the ABMU to Cwm Taff Local Health Board.

I hope this assists in the Committee's inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



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