

Welsh Government response to the consultation on the draft assessment of local well-being for Conwy and Denbighshire, required by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

Thank you for sight of Conwy and Denbighshire PSB's Assessment of Local Well-being.

Welsh Government acknowledges that the preparation of an assessment and the supporting evidence is a significant undertaking and recognises the amount of work that has been accomplished. Covid-19 has brought huge challenges to the public sector and PSB partners have demonstrated real dedication and resolve in overcoming some truly testing situations over this period. PSBs are demonstrating that they too have a crucial role to play in the recovery from the pandemic, in considering the social, economic, environmental and cultural impacts on communities and co-ordinating the longer-term response. Given all of this, we also recognise that the assessments have been prepared during extraordinary circumstances and this has been taken into consideration when reviewing them.

Our focus has been on the main areas we consider will go towards providing you with a comprehensive view of the state of well-being in your area, ultimately equipping you with a good, clear understanding of the sort of priorities you as a PSB can target your collective efforts to best effect on in your well-being plan. These are the second round of assessments and it is hoped that there will be lessons learned from the first iteration, building on what happened previously.

We have structured our response to the consultation on your assessment in the same way as in 2017 which is as follows:

- **General comments** providing an overview of thoughts on the assessment;
- More **specific comments** on the way in which the analysis has been undertaken and presented and the way in which the statutory requirements have been met;
- A **final summary table** which identifies the areas we would suggest could benefit from further development. We are adopting a consistent approach to these matters which have been categorised as follows:
 - **Category A** – these are significant issues which we would hope would be addressed prior to publication of the well-being assessment. They might relate, for example, to compliance with the statutory requirements or a fundamental issue with the quality of the analysis
 - **Category B** – these are matters which are important and would support a better informed well-being plan and we would hope could be addressed alongside the development of the plan
 - **Category C** – these are matters which would strengthen the assessment but could be addressed over time.

We will be using the same approach in responding to each of the assessments.

Overall Thoughts

This assessment demonstrates clearly the commitment that Conwy & Denbighshire PSB has made to embrace the challenge of assessing well-being in the area. It engages well with the key areas identified in the statutory and non-statutory guidance and demonstrates good use of a range of evidence to support the analysis.

Our evaluation identifies some areas for further development which will hopefully not take much effort to resolve, and if addressed will go a long way to strengthening the assessment. On the whole, the assessment provides a detailed and thorough analysis of well-being in Conwy and Denbighshire.

Comments on particular aspects of the Assessment

Statutory Requirements

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (WFG Act) specifies a number of areas that the assessment cover. This assessment appears to cover some, but not all, of the statutory requirements contained in the WFG Act.

The assessment website allows you to browse by community area across the PSB area. Each community area has a profile, although the way these are structured and the depth of content varies between Conwy and Denbighshire, with more information provided for the community areas in Denbighshire.

Overall, the assessment provides a detailed picture of well-being across Conwy and Denbighshire as a whole, and for community areas within Denbighshire in particular. However, it would be helpful to get more of a sense of the state of well-being in each of the community areas in Conwy and where the greatest challenges exist.

The community area overviews provide a link to an area profile, which presents the data in tables. It might be more effective to integrate the data you have with the analysis contained in the community overviews. E.g. for Conwy West, 'older age structure than Wales and GB' followed by a graph or table which demonstrates this. Analysis with supporting data would strengthen these sections.

The following assessments and reviews do not immediately appear to have been used which the WFG Act specifies the board must consider when preparing the well-being assessment:

- Sufficiency of Nursery education provision review
- Sufficiency of play opportunities assessment
- Combating Substance Misuse strategic assessment
- Strategic Assessment relating to the Reduction of Reoffending

Structure and Format

The separate tabs for each of the topics within each theme offer a sensible and effective way of breaking up the analysis – i.e. the current picture, comparison with the past, predictions for the future, feedback, and knowledge gaps. We were impressed with the way that the assessment does not consider things in isolation, with a lot of cross-referencing taking place which must have taken a large degree of effort to achieve.

We found the online layout of the main body of work sometimes difficult to navigate, e.g. if you followed a series of tabs and links, there are no breadcrumbs to take you back to a previous section. It could be difficult to know whether there might be anything that you may have missed.

The Executive Summary knits everything together neatly – if the reader wants to find out further detail about an area they can easily go to the relevant section for further data and analysis.

One area we considered was presentation – it might be improved if the text could be broken up with images and graphs in order to make the assessment easier to read and digest.

Engagement

The 'engagement led' approach, which involved extensive engagement at the start of the assessment process is impressive given the obstacles put in place by the pandemic over the last two years. There has been a very good involvement of citizens, including seldom heard groups.

There is a good reflection on the limitations of the virtual workshops and the questionnaires in terms of response rates. For the purposes of sharing practice, as well as the assessment, it would be useful to include more detail on the virtual workshops / focus groups and forums that were held (specifically the County Conversation focus groups and youth focus groups). For example, how many workshops were held? How many participants were there? Were the discussions recorded, and how were the outputs subsequently analysed? The assessment briefly mentions the regional interactive voice forum – it would also be interesting to hear more about these – i.e. from the fifty organisations that attended was there representation across all sectors or any noticeable gaps? It also notes that workshops were offered to the Deaf and Visually impaired forums; supporting information would be insightful to other PSBs and partners.

Each theme has a section called 'What people have said' – this could benefit from some indication of how common different kinds of feedback were, or some direct

quotes to more strongly illustrate the voice of participants who engaged with the PSB.

Balance and Comprehensiveness

The assessment is split into four well-being themes covering each of the pillars. There is also cross-referencing where relevant which is good to see so that the different areas are not viewed in isolation. For example, the agriculture and food sector is viewed through multiple lenses including cultural well-being / identity and expression (e.g. the agriculture / food community and links to food events) as well as the more obvious environmental and economic lenses.

The coverage of issues that have been explored demonstrates how much work has gone into the assessment, e.g. the impact of Brexit on the rural economy. There is recognition regarding some of the areas of weakness from the last assessment, namely culture and how this is still proving challenging. It would be good to get a sense from you down the line of how helpful you found the WCPP briefings.

Overall, the assessment provides the board with a good range of issues to consider and look into further as they consider the priorities for the well-being plan.

Reflective and Critical Approach

There is a clear section in the introduction which reflects on the limitations within the assessment in terms of data gaps, aspects that have remained challenging since the last assessment (for example, availability of data on marginalised groups, evidence on social and cultural aspects of well-being), difficulties in engagement because of Covid, how gaps can be filled in future (i.e. through the use of data from the 2021 Census). This is good to see and, overall, the honesty makes the assessment more credible, demonstrating the difficulties faced in obtaining some data rather than choosing to ignore it completely.

Under 'Knowledge Gaps', some themes only say that there is an impact from Covid, but it would be helpful to be more specific about why Covid is creating evidence gaps in that particular well-being theme. For example, has collection of some data stopped, or is Covid causing the data to be skewed?

Quality of Analytical Approach

The assessment is clear that engagement, routine data and future trends analysis were synthesised and interlinked. It is apparent that a lot of thought has been put into this from the insights produced. The final assessment could be further strengthened with the addition of a more detailed methodology tab (or adding to the engagement and consultation tab) that goes through more detail of how the data was collected, analysed and synthesised.

There is recognition throughout of the strengths, weaknesses/limitations of the evidence base and for example where more collaboration with regional partners is required, demonstrating the highly reflective and honest approach taken in the assessment. This adds credibility to the assessment and provides a strong basis for informing the plan, whilst also highlighting areas where more research and evidence is required.

Future Trends

There is good reflection on the longer-term trends and where these may have changed since the previous assessment based on Covid, Brexit and climate change. These include impacts on tourism opportunities and how climate change is likely to disproportionately impact on those already experiencing poverty.

The main chapters have introductory sections on 'what is happening now' and 'what we know or predict about the future'. This shows a reflection on the challenges (and opportunities) of achieving, for example, a low carbon / environmentally sustainable economy and what this means for local industry, agriculture and public services.

Feedback from other policy areas

Based on the feedback we have received from policy specialists across the Welsh Government, there are some very specific areas which we highlight for your consideration. For example:

- It would be good if the assessment included greater reference to the benefits of childcare provision, analysis of the role it plays in supporting the well-being of parents in the area, and some evidence of engagement with parents/carers/providers;
- The analysis on 'best start in life' is effective and broad ranging, and covers a lot of ground, including economic and social factors;
- The data appears to cover both climate risk and climate mitigation, which is good to see. There are expressions of how a changing climate will affect

communities, but also how a changing economy will also affect communities.
This is welcomed.

Areas for development

Category A

If not already included, reference to the following reviews and assessments:

- Sufficiency of Nursery education provision review
- Sufficiency of play opportunities assessment
- Combating Substance Misuse strategic assessment
- Strategic Assessment relating to the Reduction of Reoffending

Category B

More detail on various means of engagement (see Engagement paragraph)

More of an explanation as to why Covid is creating evidence gaps (see paragraph on Reflection and Critical approach)

More detail on the statement of well-being in each of the community areas throughout the whole PSB area and comparisons between them.

Category C

Improving the accessibility and user-friendliness of the assessment (see Structure and Format paragraph).