

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: SPECIAL PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 28TH JANUARY, 2022

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors M. Cook
P. Baldwin
G. Davies
J. Holt
J. Millard
M. Moore
J.C. Morgan
J.P. Morgan
G. Paulsen
S. Thomas

WITH: Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships
Service Manager, Policy and Partnerships
Policy Officer (PSB)
Scrutiny and Democratic Officer/Adviser

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>SUBJECT</u> |
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| No. 1 | <u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was reported that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service. |

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| No. 2 | <u>APOLOGIES</u> The following apologies for absence were received:- Councillor M. Cross Councillor H. Trollope Councillor C. Meredith |
| No. 3 | <u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u> There were no declarations of interest reported. |
| No. 4 | <u>PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u> Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Meeting held on December, 2021. In response to a request for an update on the Early Years Pilot and supporting evidence from the Pilot undertaken in Cwm it was reported that the relevant officer would be contacted to provide an update on the action sheet for the next meeting. The Committee AGREED this course of action. The Committee AGREED, subject the foregoing that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings. |
| No. 5 | <u>GWENT REGIONAL WELL-BEING ASSESSMENT</u> Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Policy and Partnerships. The Service Manager, Policy and Partnerships advised that the report outlined the consultation draft of the regional Gwent Well-Being Assessment in line with statutory timelines and informed Members of the consultation process and next steps for the draft Assessment of Local Well-Being for Gwent. The Service Manager explained that an overview of the report would be provided along with the assessment detailed in the appendix to the report. At this juncture, the Policy Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the scope and background as detailed in the report. |

The Service Manager added that the document presented was a draft version, therefore there would be gaps to be completed prior to the assessment being finalised.

The Service Manager, Policy and Partnerships gave a detailed overview of the Draft Gwent Well-Being Assessment and outlined the work which had been undertaken across the PSB partnerships and highlighted the key areas of impact, as follows:-

- Social Well Being – Deprivation
- Social Well Being – Housing
- Social Well Being – Health
- Social Well Being – Community Safety
- Social Well Being – Education
- Social Well Being - Transport

At this juncture, the Chair invited questions from Members.

A Member raised concerns in relation to public transport and felt that access to public transport should be paramount in this assessment. The Service Manager noted that the information presented was a selection of issues from across the region and if the Committee felt that this needed to be considered as a response to the Regional Public Service Board (PSB) as part of the final assessments.

The Member stated that transport played a massive part in our communities and concurred that the locality and issues faced by people with transport was a great challenge. The Regional PSB needed to ensure that works were being taken forward with other transport boards to collaborate in order to solve these local issues and explore opportunities. The Service Manager added that joined up thinking in relation to transport was crucial and agreed the comments be noted as part of the conversation from the Committee.

The Policy Officer added that the slides being shared was a high level overview and advised that transport featured over the social well-being, economic and environmental chapters of the assessment, therefore concurred that there needed to be a joined up approach to tackle the issues.

The Service Manager continued with the overview of the draft assessment, as follows:-

Economic Well Being – Income
Economic Well Being – Employment

No questions were raised at this juncture, therefore the Service Manager proceeded to the next section as follows:-

Environmental Well Being – Habitats
Environmental Well Being – Climate Change and Risk
Environmental Well Being – Net Zero and One Planet Living

No questions were raised at this juncture, therefore the Service Manager proceeded to the next section as follows:-

Cultural Well-Being

The Service Manager concluded the overview of the draft assessment and noted the forming challenges. The timescales were further outlined in terms of the consultation process and it was advised that the Regional PSB would give consideration to the results of the consultation in February prior to being agreed and published by the 5th May, 2022.

A Member welcomed the Draft Assessment and concurred with the concerns in relation to transport and asked that these concerns were reflected in the response to the PSB.

A discussion ensued around the public transport challenges in Blaenau Gwent. It was hoped that Blaenau Gwent would not miss out due to the larger areas within the Region being considered by the Draft Assessment. A Member noted that the main areas of economic development would be along the Heads of the Valleys which encompassed Blaenau Gwent and would be easier for greater transport links to build the economy, however the main areas of concern were within the locality between towns and villages.

Another Member felt that this Borough missed out in some instances, therefore it was important there was joined up planning for buses and trains in even the smaller areas. There was an ambition to move people away from travelling by car, however the trains and buses could take a couple of hours with a number of buses just to travel to another town. If these issues were not addressed people would continue to travel by car as it was less time consuming.

The Service Manager – Partnerships and Policy noted the challenges in Blaenau Gwent and advised that although there had been a regional move by the Public Service Board this had been replaced by the Local Well Being Partnership. The Partnership would strive to address the specific areas at a Blaenau Gwent level.

Councillor G. Paulsen left the meeting at this juncture

Another Member concurred with the concerns raised in relation to transport and noted the comments raised by Members at Full Council which echoed the concerns being raised.

The Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships noted the comments and in terms of Blaenau Gwent missing out it was advised that Blaenau Gwent was at the top of a number of tables.

A further discussion ensued around the creation of the of Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) which would commence from June and this CJC would cover the South East Wales area and be looking at links to Gwent. The Head of Governance and Partnerships concurred that all bodies needed to work together to ensure that there was a robust integrated public transport service around Gwent and within small areas. It was paramount that children and young people were able to access transport and it would allow older generations that were isolated to conveniently visit nearby towns. A reference was made to the discussions raised in Full Council and it was hoped that some of the strategic aspects raised would be brought forward.

Councillor J.C. Morgan left the meeting at this juncture.

A Member noted the joint working approach to be undertaken across Gwent and looked forward to see how it developed. The Member concurred that unfortunately the elderly suffered greatly in terms of isolation due to lack of public transport. The Member referred to the Fflecsi bus service in operation within the Borough which was difficult to access by the elderly and noted a number of issues which had been reported to him as elected Member. The Member was of the opinion that if this service could be more flexible it would be more effective.

Councillor M. Moore left the meeting at this juncture.

The Committee AGREED that the Assessment be shared with all elected Members once it had been finalised.

The Head of Governance and Partnerships wished to express her thanks to the Service Manager and Policy Officer for the amount of work undertaken on the Draft Assessment. The Chair and Members of the Committee also reiterated their thanks to the officers.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee provided specific comment on the draft Gwent Well-being Assessment for consideration by the Gwent Public Services Board before approval (Option 2).
