

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Date: 24 February 2021

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors J Clarke (Chair), S Marshall, G Berry, M Linton, J Hughes and K Whitehead

In Attendance: Beverly Owen (Chief Executive), Will Beer (Public Health Wales), Steve Ward (Chief Executive - Newport Live), Steve Davies (Natural Resources Wales), Harriet Bleach (Natural Resources Wales), Tracy McKim (Partnership Policy & Involvement Manager), Nicola Dance (Senior Policy & Partnership Officer), Ed Pryce (Assistant Director - EAS), Sarah Davies (Principal Challenger Adviser - EAS), Hayley Davies-Edwards (Principal Challenge Adviser - EAS), Sarah Morgan (Chief Education Officer), Andrew Powles (Assistant Head of Education - Engagement and Learning), Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Adviser) and Ellie Howard (Graduate Trainee)

Apologies: Councillors M Spencer, R Mogford and T Suller

1 Declarations of Interest

None.

2 Public Services Board Well-being Plan 2020-21 Q2 Performance

Attendees:

- **Steve Ward – PSB Intervention Lead for The Newport Offer** (Newport Live)
- **William Beer – PSB Intervention Lead for Strong Resilient Communities** (NHS Public Health Team Consultant)
- **Beverley Owen – Covering for the PSB Intervention Lead for Sustainable Travel** (Chief Executive of Newport City Council)
- **Steve Morgan – PSB Intervention Lead for Green and Safe Spaces** (Natural Resource Wales)
- **Nicola Dance – Covering for PSB Intervention Lead for Right Skills** (Senior Policy and Partnership Officer)
- **Harriet Bleach** - Natural Resource Wales
- **Tracy McKim – Policy Partnership & Involvement Manager**

The Public Health Team consultant gave an overview of the Public Services Board (PSB), explain that their role is to ensure that the One Newport partnership acts consistently with 5 key ways of working: long term, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement. It was explained as important to analyse whether we are on track to meet our wellbeing objectives, and there are a number of indicators to test this, which will be outlined in the various presentations.

The consultant then introduced various representatives for the different interventions being presented.

The Newport Offer

The key aspects of the Newport Offer were outlined by a representative from Newport Live, including the Place-making charter and Purple Flag status (which has now been achieved). It was acknowledged that the pandemic has had a serious impact on the Newport Offer, due to the reduction in the night time economy and tourism. Going forwards, community wealth building, to ensure that long term economic growth stays within Gwent, as well as a focus on the city as destination will be essential key aims. Supporting Carbon reduction, as seen in the renewable energy instalment in the Velodrome is another key aim. Finally, supporting tourism and the rural economy are all part of future plans.

The Newport Offer is an all-encompassing approach. The question now is how do we re-focus and take this forward? There is a need to develop new key performance measures, and we must ensure we engage with the wider sector when doing this. The central aim is to ensure that the Newport Offer is appealing for education, employment and tourism, to demonstrate that Newport is a great place and a world class destination. Engagement of Newport Youth Council has been excellent during Covid-19. They will review Newport Offer to ensure they are part of this development going forwards. (It was explained that the Leader brought forward this action).

Now, we want to demonstrate that the council and PSB is reaching out to service users and citizens. It will be important to make progress by working together. There will be a review of this to ensure that the Newport Offer is relevant to everyone in the city.

Members asked the following:

- A member asked whether the scorecards could reflect which way the KPIs are trending. I.e. if something is rated as green, it is possible that it could be trending down so could be at risk. This was acknowledged by the chair as a useful comment.
- Members asked where the PSB see themselves moving forward with recovery?

The representative for the Newport Live replied, commenting that he spoke to the Minister for Leisure and Culture regarding this. He enquired about Wales' control plan to come out of Covid-19 from tier 4 to tier 1. There will also be a mini/staggered tiering system as this progresses, rather than everything opening at once. A timeline has been requested from multiple sectors, so there is an indication for how we will start some of this work. For example, the tourism sector and ticketed events will need advanced warning of when they will be allowed to open in order to prepare. Similarly, getting the confidence of the public at this time is a challenge. There is concern from the public at the moment due to the new variant, and a lack of clarity over this and how it spreads. Hoping to have further clarity on guidance regarding this from WG on Friday.

- Members commented that a lot of groups grow at grassroots levels in Newport, for example local action groups. Is there a way that we can bring these partnerships to a central point- e.g. if there is a good local project from one area, could there be teaching and learning for another area who want to do a similar thing? Where we have good examples of success, could these be put in one place? This would also demonstrate all of the work which is taking place across the city.

The representative from Newport Live replied to say that we need to take this idea forward. There is a possibility that there could be a digital forum where this could be compiled together. The leader is chairing a group next week for the Newport Offer where this could be discussed. It is important to question whether the vision of the

Newport Offer is still appropriate and consider if this is what local residents want. This digital forum could assist with this.

The Chief Executive agreed with the Member's comments here and asked for those action points to be picked up regarding local learning.

Green and Safe Spaces Intervention

A representative for Natural Resources Wales presented the projects for Green and Safe spaces. The projects that sit under the intervention have expanded and developed well despite Covid-19. It is important to mention the success of the network- the number of partners within this have grown.

One of the objectives was to issue e-newsletters, the first two of these have now been distributed successfully. The funding proposal submitted for Green Arc project, Green Infrastructure mapping and Green Prescribing Scoping Exercise was also explained.

There were some considered risks, but these did not materialise. One risk was lack of participation in the project, but this was not realised. Another was that green spaces were not sufficiently protected; this remains a risk but is being mitigated. The final risk was the impact of Covid-19, however the team have worked well virtually, so this risk has not been realised.

Regarding the key performance measures, the only 'red' measure was for Network Workshops in the previous quarter. However, it was explained that this is no longer red in the current quarter, as there was a workshop in November and 3 more planned ahead. Work is now being undertaken to challenge ourselves more- the performance measures are not just about measuring numbers but also about quality. The group are looking to change and improve these KPMs. There has been a collaborative and co-productive approach throughout the past months. This intervention is a big challenge for Newport but also holds great opportunity.

Members asked the following:

- Members expressed their support for the green spaces project. One member enquired specifically about whether Bettws is low on green spaces- could this information be quantified?

The representative from Natural Resources Wales replied, saying that there is a project to map the green infrastructure that we have, in addition the green arc project. However, there are even more opportunities available and he would welcome hearing about ideas that members and their communities have. Covid-19 has really highlighted how much people value green spaces. It is important to acknowledge that more deprived areas have less access to green spaces.

Another representative from Natural Resources Wales (Harriet Bleach) replied regarding Bettws. She is currently working with Bettws early learning centre, who are working towards woodland development which is NRW owned. Much of the managed land in Bettws is Newport City Council/Newport City Homes owned, so these organisations will be key in managing that. Acknowledged that it is important to improve access to those open spaces.

Members replied to say that we need to identify the green spaces we have, need to highlight where residents can go, where people can actually access and is allowed NRW representatives replied to say that they are hoping to develop an app to promote local green spaces with accompanying information.

- Members mentioned that recently, many people are taking up couch to 5K running schemes. Is there a way to promote good local routes (e.g. 5K/10K) for people doing this? Also considering walking groups, how can these be promoted? Also want to

consider the gardening aspect of green spaces- how can the PSB support this- this would be good for mental health.

NRW representative replied to say that Couch to 5K has been started via promotion from social media. Also some analysis about private garden space in Newport has taken place, indicating that there is a lot of this kind of space.

The Public Health Team consultant also replied, expressing that this links to green prescribing- community gardens, allotments etc. This is currently being reviewed.

- Members asked, when there are places that we need to protect, how do we develop a community or NCC land bank for zones that we want to keep free of development? How can we be protecting these areas?

The NRW representative explained that one of the challenges to this is resourcing this, but we shouldn't rule it out. NRW are keen to explore these opportunities as a partnership, particularly for areas of Newport that don't have as many green spaces.

- Members asked, regarding the Ringland area, are there going to be more allotment spaces? Also, more space needed for local sports activities, how can we help these groups as a partnership? There are also problems with anti-social behaviour in the woodland area.

The Chief Executive replied that we will come back to those specific ward issues and the relevant officers will reply.

The Public Health Team consultant explained that they have been looking at safe routes to school to get people out into the community walking. Possibility with the woodland area to consider what we could do, possibly use ideas from what was done in Duffryn with the Duffryn link. Want to consider how communities can reclaim these spaces.

Strong and Resilient Communities Intervention

The consultant from the Public Health Team presented this item. This intervention is about bringing together community groups, voluntary groups and public bodies to work on a local partnership basis- not top-down solutions but rather solutions that are community-led. The desire for an asset based approach was expressed. There have been many challenges posed to this because of Covid-19, due to many community hubs, libraries etc. being closed. The team have been looking at the impact of the pandemic on different parts of the community, in particular groups with protected characteristics.

Participatory budgeting has been piloted in Ringland, and the health board has invested £150,000 in this initiative. This allows groups to vote on the issues that matter to them as a community. There will be a meeting online at the end of March to discuss this, with a focus on social rebuilding and recovery over the next 12 months.

It was explained that place-based working has seen the formation of wellbeing collaboratives in Ringland and in Pill. The idea behind this is to build on naturally occurring assets- the buildings, the people, those who are active in their local area, green spaces etc. One project presented is for 'social prescribing'- e.g. local social/community groups that people can be referred to if they are experiencing mental health difficulties.

Lockdown has highlighted people's willingness to serve as a volunteer to support people who need help. In the recovery phase of Covid-19, the team want to build on this civic activity and tap into this volunteering asset more.

Finally, lockdown has highlighted the issue with digital exclusion which risks widening inequalities. The team are working with Digital Communities Wales to ensure the gap isn't widening for those who can't afford broadband or tablets/laptops at home.

Members asked the following:

- Members wanted to express their agreement with the need for projects to be community-led. We want to be supporting those groups to develop. Wants to express the quality and of the presentation and thank the public health team for this.

The Public Health Team consultant replied to say that this is the real ethos of their work and is glad it has been recognised.

- Members commented regarding the unequal impact of Covid-19 for wealthier and less affluent areas of the city. How do we recover from this and encourage people after such a long period of isolation?

The Public Health Team consultant replied to say that neighbourhood hubs will be essential in this.

- Members commented that pandemic has shone a light on the work that the neighbourhood hubs do. It was highlighted how well liked and respected they are within the community. This has been one of the real positives of the pandemic.

The Right Skills Intervention

The Senior Policy and Partnership Officer presented the Right Skills Intervention on behalf of Guy Lacey, who leads the board. The partnership of this board has been very successful over the past year. One key activity has been reviewing the 'right skills' work. This has been developed by taking on board the recommendations from the Future Generations Act. It was felt that there was too narrow a focus on economic wellbeing- so now the 'Right Skills' work includes social, cultural, and environmental wellbeing. There are now three key strands of activity which were presented in turn.

The first of the strands is skills to support long term economic growth sectors. The main piece of work related to this is a 'Planning for digital careers' event for year 9 pupils. This is now a virtual event. We have aimed to involve key businesses and employers from Newport- presenting exciting things from the digital sector. Participation levels from employers has been very pleasing. There are small businesses as well as major employers taking part. This event is taking place mid-March. Afterwards, this material can be retained (i.e. video presentations etc.) for pupils to continue to access for their benefit.

The second strand is reducing and preventing disadvantage and increasing equality of opportunity. The main focus for this strand is helping young people not to become Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)- last year Newport was second lowest in Wales for year 11 NEET which shows great progress. Planning is underway for a Film Sector Careers masterclass which is aimed at 18-30 year olds who are NEET and disadvantaged in some way. Purpose is making them aware of career opportunities as well as leading to training opportunities. The plans have had to change and this has had to become virtual instead, this was disappointing but important to deliver this as a pilot this year.

The third strand of work is expanding the area of skills beyond economic wellbeing. Turning the focus to adult learning and helping people to have a life well lived. This is related to social, cultural and environmental wellbeing, and involves developing skills such as carbon literacy and Welsh Medium Skills development. The Reach Restart project is part of this, which is particularly for those with English as an additional language, for example refugees or asylum seekers.

With regards to the KPMs, the NEET indicators are currently set at the Welsh Average. Reach restart is 'amber' due to the impact of Covid-19 on activities. New activity is shortly to be expanded upon.

Members asked the following:

- Members commented that they were very pleased regarding the news that Newport was the second lowest in Wales for NEET figures. It was acknowledged that it will perhaps be more obvious once restrictions are lifted what the real impact of Covid-19 has been.

Sustainable Travel Intervention

The Chief Executive presented the Sustainable Travel Intervention. It was expressed that there has been significant progress with regards to this intervention over the last few months.

There are 3 steps in the sustainable travel agenda. The first is that the PSB are to be champions of sustainable travel. 23 public sector organisations have signed up to sustainable travel charter. Commitments include promoting cycling, public transport etc. This year has presented the opportunity to reset the agenda with regards to sustainable travel.

The second step is prioritising walking and cycling for travel. There has been a PR campaign to encourage people to travel sustainably. This was a significant recommendation of the Burns Commission and is integral to the work of the PSB. 3 schools have been taking part in the active travel programmes. Pleasing to note that Newport Transport has 16 low emission buses in transit and new electric vehicle trucks.

The third step is for charging points for electric vehicles to be rolled out across the city. The final part of this surrounding taxis, wanting to develop charging points for taxis. In conclusion, lots of good work has gone on in supporting sustainable transport in Newport.

Members asked the following:

- Members wanted to emphasise the positive outcomes so far and thank the team for their work. It was expressed that often solutions to sustainability are very small things, like getting people to change small habits. It is important to acknowledge that small changes make a difference too. How can we improve our approach to this?

The Chief Executive agreed with this point. This is about generational change. New ways of working have been demonstrated, now is the time that we need to take this head on. The sum of smaller parts will have the greatest impact of all. The active travel network will be a huge part of this, encouraging people to make these smaller journeys without the car. Assurance that these comments will be taken back to Ceri.

Members replied to say that initiatives such as Green Caerleon are being set up- how we could be tapping into that? The Chief Executive replied, expressing that we are heavily reliant on community participation to help us get to the goal we want to reach. The NRW representative replied to emphasise the importance of behavioural changes being essential. We need to understand what it will take for people to change their behaviour.

- Members made comments regarding electric vehicles. How can we be more efficient at using electric vehicles going forward? Are we looking at renewable energy sources to fuel this so we are not using fossil fuels? Can there be something related to bus tickets for example- showing people the contribution they have made to green agenda, money off a bus ticket (equivalent of a coffee card) etc.- i.e. the use of 'green points' to reward 'green' behaviour?

The Chief Executive replied to say that we are working with partners with regards to an energy plan. Discussions are underway regarding sustainable travel and how this fits into broader agenda in relation to climate change.

The NRW representative agreed that this idea of 'green points' is a good idea- will speak to colleagues to understand what is already in place and what more could be developed.

- Members questioned how do we flex and innovate the plan with innovative suggestions that are being raised?

The Chief Executive agreed with this- there are opportunities for innovation which are not always captured. How do we capture this in a different way? The Public Health Team consultant commented that it is important to consider how we can bring in case studies to include the human experience alongside the scorecard. These will highlight difficult issues we need to work in partnership together on- they must be tackled together. We have this strength of relationship within the partnerships that we didn't have before.

Members replied to express that they wouldn't want these good ideas to get lost. Because of the quality of the input, how do we change the existing plan to help the direction it is going in? The Public Health Team consultant replied to say there is an annual review of the objectives. The existing plan was based on a detailed assessment of the wellbeing needs. This developed a key list of priorities. Members emphasised opportunities to improve but this is not a criticism of all the good work which has taken place.

- Members asked what adaptations are unique to pandemic and what will remain? And what are the challenges moving forward in the short, medium and long term?

The Public Health Team consultant replied saying that digital transformation has been huge. In addition, sustainable travel, not travelling for meetings etc. has been improved. Civic activity to support vulnerable people has also been important. The Chief Executive replied that the main challenge will be the economy. How do we support the resurgence of the economic footprint in Newport? It is important to focus on the positive first and foremost. Relationship building and community resilience have been the key positives.

The Public Health Team consultant explained that people are having to reinvent their futures, now the focus is on these people. The right skills team are looking to help address this. This will be key to economic recovery. Members expressed that it is very positive to hear that the partnership is strengthening rather than weakening.

Conclusions:

1. The Committee **noted** the performance within the Public Services Board Well-being Plan Performance for Quarter 2 in Appendices 1 to 5.
2. The Committee **noted** the Minutes of the Public Services Board held on 8 December 2020 in Appendix 6.
3. The Committee **made** the following comments to the Public Services Board:
 - a) The Committee wished to express their thanks and gratefulness for the work put into these presentations, and all the work that has gone on through Covid-19.

- b) The Committee made comment that energy and vibrancy has been a key aspect of this. The Committee were also pleased to hear of the strength of the PSB, and noted that it is very encouraging to understand that their partnership has strengthened. Additional comment was made that there are really clear signs of excellent partnership working and that the PSB is clearly a very good team.
- c) The PSB gave the Committee confidence that what they were saying was true. There was a genuine sense that they were joined up. The ability of team members to step in for others shows the strength of the partnership and genuine good teamwork.
- d) The Committee are looking forward to see these plans and initiatives move forward.
- e) The committee would like the PSB to consider how they can extend diversity and inclusion moving forward. Young peoples' views should be included wherever possible and encouraging the Youth Council is essential as they are the future and the committee want to commend the involvement of them already.

3 **Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2021 - 2022**

Invitees:

Ed Pryce - Education Achievement Service (EAS) Assistant Director:
Policy and Strategy

Sarah Davies - **Principal Challenge Advisor (EAS)**

Hayley Davies-Edwards – **Principal Challenge Advisor (EAS)**

Sarah Morgan - **Chief Education Officer**

The Chief Education Officer introduced the EAS team and their report. EAS represents the 5 counties in South Wales to provide a high level of support for our schools and learners. The business plan will be presented. This has been developed to address Newport specific issues, particularly with Covid-19 in mind.

The Assistant Director of EAS presented the EAS report. Emphasised that this is about partnership, as the EAS work in close partnership with all 5 LAs. The key element of this plan is learning lessons from the pandemic and moving forwards with hope. The language of closing gaps and learning deficits is not the language school leaders are using.

This plan has been made to support the LA statutory function. This plan is designed to be flexible to meet the needs of specific schools. We must consider how schools will emerge strengthened from the pandemic; there is a need to build on what has worked well, particularly the virtual environment. The balance between challenge and support must be right, as it is critical to remain sensitive to the needs of the schools.

The Assistant Director of EAS highlighted the change of data gathering this year- there is not data from external exams this year. It will therefore be important to focus on the people aspect of performance, and the specific needs of pupils and schools. School development plans are an essential part of this.

The strategic priorities in this plan are about a commitment to partnership working. They are focussed on the learning experience and quality of teaching and learning across schools. Additionally, there is a focus on essential skills such as English, Maths, and social skills. We want to consider how we can best address the needs of learners- not by addressing them as whole groups but individuals. It is necessary to address the impact of physical and mental health problems during Covid-19. Additionally, we are looking at a new curriculum design.

Wellbeing priorities are also a key element of this. We are continuing to focus on disadvantaged and vulnerable learners. Coaching and mentoring programmes are to be implemented on a regional and national basis. Want to value a range of characteristics which is broader than end of key stage outcomes.

There are still uncertain financial grant projections. Whilst nothing significantly awry is being predicted, we are 3 months later with final grant projection than usual. EAS are due to hear from Welsh Government next week to confirm to schools the figures. There remains uncertainty surrounding the pandemic but the EAS are aiming to mitigate this risk as much as possible. There has been a managed reduction of EAS staff profile over time, which reflects that there are more staff within schools funded by EAS than before.

Members asked the following:

- Members thanked the presenters for this comprehensive report, recognising the complexity of this work. The work that the EAS do is highly valued. This is a strong report in very challenging times.
- Members commented in relation to the partnership side of things, citing that there are local recovery plans. Is the EAS happy that they can get around all 5 local recovery plans?

The assistant director of EAS replied that there are regular meetings between EAS and the LA- we think these partnerships are strong and EAS believe they can meet needs of all 5 local authorities.

- Members commented in relation to mental health needs in pupils. What is ongoing for teachers to support this? Is there awareness raising to support this for governors, how can they support school and staff?

The Chief Education Officer explained that the LA Leads for Inclusion (Katy Rees) meet with vulnerable pupil leads across schools, to ensure there is no duplication with approaches. The EAS provide mental health toolkit training, whilst the LA provides school based counselling. There is a raft of mental health work is carefully constructed on a strategic level.

The assistant director of EAS commented that there is support in place for governors. Within the distance and blended guidance for governors, a key element of this is the wellbeing element. Planning is underway for a governor conference for wellbeing.

- Members asked if the learning from the pandemic captured anywhere? The 'acts of valour' that have taken place across the pandemic should be noted as positive outcomes.

The assistant director of EAS remarked that the 'distance and blended learning' website was developed, which showcases case studies to celebrate these successes.

The EAS Principal Challenge Advisor reported that a task and finish group was developed. Tomorrow there is a distance and blended learning session where schools will be showcasing their successes. 'Celebrate, share, support, review' is a new pilot programme. Schools have constructed presentations of the innovation of their distance and blended learning work. This will provide schools with the opportunity to stop and reflect what they've accomplished. As a region we want to learn from them. Members wished to ensure that all the good work is captured and rewarded accordingly.

- Members made comments regarding returning to normal with blended learning. Will there be changes to blended learning in the future? What are the lessons learned that we will look to adapt to?

An EAS representative replied that this is the conversation taking place in schools now. It is very common for schools to say that this has changed their practice forever. An example of this has been improved flexibility, and that people have adapted well to using technology. All schools are thinking along these lines.

The EAS Principal Challenge Advisor referenced the distance and blended learning website once again. Collaborations made by Coleg Gwent have been further refined, and they will not shy away from this in the future.

- Members asked what is the perceived future with regards to the financial situation?

The Assistant Director of EAS remarked that there has not been any furloughing due to being a publicly funded body. They have found that the EAS is able to function very well virtually. The delivery model to schools has enabled the EAS to be busier than ever. There have also been some efficiency savings on travel.

The EAS Principal Challenge Advisor commented that there is real efficiency with the staff who are deployed. Support from EAS has gone into schools to support staffing levels.

- Members wanted to understand how the partnership has had to adapt. What has been learnt as partners?

An EAS representative explained that a key learning point has been that good learning is good learning irrespective of the medium. Whether pupils are in person, with a paper pack, online, or interacting with teachers in chat, children respond when learning is authentic, stimulating and interesting for them. Teachers have adapted brilliantly and considered the craft of teaching on a different platform. The creativity of schools and teachers has been brilliant. It doesn't matter what is happening, if the learning is stimulating for the child.

The EAS principal challenge advisor explained that the EAS are now able to offer professional learning to a wider range of people, and on demand, now because we are using this virtually. Attendance at network events has been improved for people who can't make in person events.

The Assistant Director for EAS commented that this has allowed them to communicate with clarity, not putting on pressure just by offering things to schools.

Conclusions:

The Committee **agreed** to forward this Minute as a detailed record of its consideration of the EAS Business Plan 2021-21 to the Cabinet to consider, in particular the following comments and commendations:

- The committee wanted to extend a massive thank you to EAS and the Education department for all the work that has taken place
- The Committee remarked that it was very encouraging to hear of the strength of the partnership, and about the adaptability and what they are learning.
- The Committee noted that it was very clear that the EAS, Education Department and schools are learning together and taking steps forward. There is clearly a strong partnership between EAS and LA, who seem happy working together and this relationship is getting stronger and stronger.

- The Committee noted that both organisations know Newport schools well. It is evident that they do speak with each other about issues and have good understanding. Comment was made that historically it has not been that way- schools have wanted to improve by themselves. The Committee voiced that it was important to maintain this new outlook going forward.
- The Committee wanted to raise that it is important for governors to be well aware of the wellbeing and mental health of students. It is essential that schools should be very aware of the resources available there.

The meeting terminated at 7.58 pm