

Ministerial Taskforce for the Valleys

28 June 2018, 10:30-12:30

Richard Price Centre, Bettws, Bridgend

In attendance

Taskforce Members

Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, Ken Skates AM (chair)
Leader of the House and Chief Whip, Julie James AM
Minister for Housing and Regeneration, Rebecca Evans AM
Judith Evans, Principal, Coleg y Cymoedd
Brian Morgan, Professor of Entrepreneurship at Cardiff Met University
Andrew Diplock, Entrepreneur, Angel Investor and Advisor
Martin Mansfield, General Secretary, Wales TUC
Ann Beynon, Non Executive Director and member of CBI Wales Council.

Programme Board Members

Maureen Howell, Equality and Prosperity – Deputy Director
John Howells, Director, Housing and Regeneration (SRO)
Madeleine Brindley, Special Advisor

Valleys Taskforce Team

Sarah King, Valleys Taskforce Project Lead
Laurie Hayward, Senior Programme Manager, Valleys Taskforce
Rebecca Janczewski, Engagement Manager, Valleys Taskforce

Speakers

Rachel Dolman, Knowledge and Analytical Skills, Welsh Government
James Burgess, Head of Housing Supply Team, Welsh Government
Simon Gale, Director of Planning at Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Dawn Chadwick, Senior Communications Manager, Welsh Government

Apologies

Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, Alun Davies AM
Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, Eluned Morgan AM
Gaynor Richards, Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service
Jocelyn Davies, Former Deputy Minister for Housing and Regeneration
Cllr Andrew Morgan, Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf
Dr Chris Jones, Interim Chair, HEIW
Tracey Burke, Director General, Education and Public Services

Item 1: Welcome and Introductions.

1. In the absence of Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure (KS) welcomed Taskforce members to the tenth meeting of the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys.

Item 2: Measuring the targets in the plan and data collection update.

1. Rachel Dolman (RD) presented the work Knowledge and Analytical Skills (KAS) have

been doing to measure the ambitious targets within the Our Valleys, Our Future delivery plan to provide a clear picture of Taskforce progress to date.

2. RD highlighted the various data sets available, where and how the data is sourced and how the information is disaggregated.
3. RD explained the complexity of measuring specific targets within the plan, referencing the target to create 7000 fair, secure, sustainable jobs and that there is no single source of data available to measure this target.
4. In addition to the data sources already used, given the geographical boundary of the Taskforce plan, Well-being data captured by local authority area can also be used to help measure progress specifically within the Valleys area.
5. Martin Mansfield (MM) commented that the complexity of measuring data was evident and should be noted.
6. Ann Beynon (AB) said that for the 7000 jobs target we should not only understand the number of jobs but also the number of hours people are contracted to work, for example information on zero hours contracts.
7. Julie James (JJ) asked how often data is available from KAS so that the Taskforce can use it to react and improve. Martin Mansfield (MM) commented that it would be good to track and use more real time data as this would enable us to work better with private sector businesses.
8. AB added it would be particularly helpful during the upcoming period with Brexit uncertainty to identify and address gaps in real time.
9. Members discussed the possibility of increasing data set, however, RD explained we already boost data and are looking at ways to increase the data available; however, this can be at a considerable cost.
10. RD confirmed that data is collected monthly and that going forward KAS will provide a quarterly update to the Taskforce. **Action**
11. JJ noted that it would be useful to get an update on the Employability Plan and it was agreed that this should be included in the agenda for the next meeting. **Action**

Item 3: Our Valleys, Our Future – Progress Report.

12. Maureen Howell (MH) provided an introduction to the draft progress report due to be published by the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services on 10 July and invited Members to comment.
13. Members agreed that the draft report was a good reflection of activity since November 2017, however, felt that the engagement undertaken on the South Wales Metro and the investment to create jobs should be highlighted more clearly within the report before publication.
14. JJ highlighted the need to look at the interim definition of Fair Work within the economic contract to ensure consistency and to be aware of the forthcoming Fair Work Commission announcement.
15. Rebecca Evans (RE) highlighted that the report needed to more clearly reference the housing quality work being undertaken with the Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs.
16. MM asked for the opportunity to engage in the development of the second version of the Our Valleys, Our Future delivery plan, due to be updated and re-published in November. **Action**

Item 4: Housing – Alignment of priorities between Welsh Government and Local Authorities.

17. James Burgess (JB) from WG, Home & Places Division gave an update on the joint working that is being taken forward to meet the 20,000 affordable homes target, including specific work between WG and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCT), and joint working with the Cardiff City Deal.

18. JB highlighted some of the challenges of meeting the 20,000 affordable homes target and the opportunities, particularly in the Valleys where there is a significant need for affordable housing and noticeable large sites suitable for development but where large plc builders typically do not choose to build.
19. JB explained how WG are working with Valleys local authorities to look at innovative and new ways to encourage and enable SME builders and individuals to build affordable homes.
20. Simon Gale (SG), Director of Planning at Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, presented the work they have been leading on housing, including the establishment of a Council Developer Forum, which brings together representatives from the local authority, housing associations, plc and SME builders. The only example of this type of forum in Wales.
21. RCT's pilot initiative, which is based on the Plot Shop model, involves the authority freeing up land they own and dividing them into plots for individuals to buy and build on themselves.
22. SG explained how they are working to simplify and facilitate the build process and work with architects to design homes for the plots of land, looking at innovative financing options to provide people with affordable options to raise funds to build their home. This solution enables people earning normal wages to build their home affordably. The intention is that this initiative will be rolled out as part of Cardiff City Deal.
23. Andrew Diplock (AD) commented on the sustainability of these homes and asked if consideration had been given when developing the initiative. SG explained the first homes will be built to current building standards but that there is a future ambition to grow the model to include energy efficient homes and modular housing.
24. AB asked about the financing options, suggesting RCT work with banks rather than using public money. SG responded giving an example of a scheme in Essex where the local authority acts as a guarantor for buyers. JJ commented that it would be helpful to develop options for buyers to offer several different mortgages.
25. AB also asked about the skills to build these homes. JB explained there is a lack of skills and that the average age of a builder is currently around 50 but that WG are looking at solutions including modular housing which is less technical and will help to overcome the issue. JJ highlighted the links between modular housing and Taskforce priorities.
26. AB also asked about LDP in relation to planning. SG confirmed this is not an issue.

Item 5: Valleys Taskforce Communication Campaign

27. Dawn Chadwick (DC), Senior Communications Manager, Welsh Government, provided an update on progress with the Valleys Taskforce communications campaign.
28. Progress includes the launch of the Our Valleys song on Spotify, was written and sung by Welsh singer-songwriter Kizzy Crawford, together with more than 200 children from schools across the Valleys.
29. DC explained that the campaign also involves a project, inspired by Artist Luke Jerram's *Play Me, I'm Yours* project, which has reached more than 10 million people worldwide. The pop-up Valleys Piano project is a summer-long event for 2018 working with Valleys communities to decorate 10 pianos, which will then be situated at popular locations across the Valleys for local people to enjoy. The project aims to bring people closer to their local communities through music and creativity.

Item 6: AOB and closing remarks

30. KS closed the meeting thanking attendees for their input and noted that future

agendas will be planned around key milestones of each workstream and other relevant policy updates. The next meeting will take place on 4 October and the venue will be confirmed shortly.