

# Partnership Council for Wales – 2 March 2023

Via Microsoft Teams

## Chair's opening remarks

### Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government.

1. The Minister for Finance and Local Government (the Minister) welcomed members to the meeting and apologies were noted.
2. The Minister noted the minutes of the previous meeting (24 November 2022) had been circulated and asked if there were any comments or amendments, but there were not.
3. The Minister also confirmed that all actions from the previous meeting were either complete or in hand.

## Agenda item 1: Climate Change (standing item)

4. The Minister introduced the standing item on Climate Change. The Minister explained that this item will include a short update by Tim Peppin, Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), on the progress by the Local Government Climate Strategy Panel and the WLGA support programme and then a presentation from Richard Millar from the UK Climate Change Committee.

### *Climate Strategy Panel and WLGA Support Programme*

5. The Minister invited Tim Peppin to provide an update on the Local Government Climate Strategy Panel and the WLGA support programme. A summary report was circulated to members in advance of the meeting.
6. The report included updates on progress since the last Partnership Council for Wales (Partnership Council) meeting in November 2022 and details of a review of the Climate Strategy Panel's ways of working as the focus of work switches from investigation / prioritisation to delivery/ implementation.
7. It also sought Partnership Council's endorsement of the planned change of approach following the review, as outlined in paragraphs eight and nine of the report. The Minister proposed that Partnership Council for Wales accepted the recommendations in the report. Members agreed.

### *UK Climate Change Committee*

8. The Minister welcomed Richard Millar from the UK Climate Change Committee to the meeting for his presentation *Climate change risks to the UK and Wales*. The Minister confirmed the slides would be shared with members after the meeting.

9. Following the presentation, the Minister then opened the discussion to members to raise any questions, comments, reflections. The following key points were raised:
- Councillor Anthony Hunt detailed some examples of recent activity undertaken by Torfaen County Borough which had longer term benefits but which had faced some resistance in the shorter term. Councillor Hunt shared an example of the Council's plans for a solar farm which had encountered delays and negativity in the local press. He felt it was important for partners to support one another through the challenges.
  - Councillor Huw Thomas was interested to see the returns on Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in Richard Millar's presentation. He confirmed he shared Councillor Hunt's concerns regarding short term verses long term challenges. Cardiff Council had also built a 2500 megawatt solar farm but had encountered frustrating delays. Getting the balance right was key and there was a need for all to work together as a team to get climate change adaptations and solutions effectively in place, not for this to be a tick box exercise. Councillor Thomas confirmed the highest percentage of emissions in Cardiff were from transport followed by housing (mostly privately owned) all set against the wider context of squeezed budgets, and queried whether Richard Millar was aware of any green level investment which could be available.
  - Canon Aled Edwards confirmed Brecon Beacons National Park's full commitment to climate change, including knowing what the task meant for them and delivery on it where they could. He felt a huge barrier for National Parks was resourcing and capacity. In Wales also need to be mindful of breadth of Future Generations legislation. Canon Edwards also raised the issue of flooding in the Welsh valleys and the need to understand what could be done to adapt to and / or mitigate the problem.
  - Councillor Andrew Morgan stated climate change was already baked in, weather extremes were already in place. Storm Denis was a record breaking storm event but there is a need to plan for that again. He confirmed Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council had reduced its carbon footprint by 42% but he is aware there is still more to be done. He felt the public sector had a role in leading by example and felt that a climate change campaign to help raise public awareness of the importance of making small changes was needed. He also felt it was important to continue to invest in flood defences but acknowledged the significant long term government investment that would require. Ceri Williams, Wales TUC, stated he was pleased to see that the presentation recognised risks relating to businesses and employees, but suggested the focus should be more on the workers themselves and not just on productivity. He noted that in Scotland there was a fair worker charter to support employers and workers to plan for and manage the impact of severe weather <https://www.gov.scot/publications/severe-weather-charter/>
  - Councillor Rob Stewart queried that if the target to reach Net Zero Wales by 2050 was not achieved then what would be the percentage that Wales was contributing towards global change? Need to ensure that all of government

and partners are working together to make change. Council Stewart noted that action plan for Swansea Council to become net zero had been costed at £750m and acknowledged that financial support would need to come from UK Government and not Welsh Government. Swansea Council had the largest green fleet in Wales but was still small in terms of percentage of fleets. Premiums on electric and hydrogen vehicles remained significantly costly which restricts the scale and pace of changes local authorities would want to make. Costs associated with Tan 15 flooding arrangements were also significant. Councillor Stewart felt it was important to ensure there were policies in place to grow the economy and in turn support climate change - getting the balance right was important.

- Councillor Mark Pritchard stressed the importance of invest to save to support this area. He also felt mitigating and managing the risks of climate change was important and questioned where the Welsh Government could provide funding for schemes to support this. He noted climate change targets were challenging and as a result mindful that not all may be achieved. Therefore, he felt it was imperative for everyone involved to work together and to find a suitable way forward.

10. The Minister thanked Richard Millar for his presentation, which had led to a really important discussion. The Minister suggested it would be helpful to hear more about the Climate Change Committee's review of adaptation planning in Wales and would be keen for Richard to return to Partnership Council for Wales for a further update once the review had completed which was anticipated to be later in the year.

11. The Minister concluded the item by reminding members of the current consultation titled Just Transition to Net Zero Wales (due to close on 15 March 2023): a call for evidence for informing the development of Wales' decarbonisation pathway to Net Zero by 2050 [Just Transition to Net Zero Wales | GOV.WALES](#)

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| <p><b>Action 1:</b> To share the UK Climate Change Committee's presentation slides on <i>Climate change risks to the UK and Wales</i> with Partnership Council members</p> |
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## Agenda item 2: Keeping regional partnership arrangements under review

12. The purpose of the item was to update members on work underway to fulfil the Programme for Government / Co-operation Agreement commitment to 'Keep regional partnership working under review with local partners. A paper was circulated to members in advance of the meeting.
13. The Minister welcomed Cefin Campbell MS to the meeting, the Co-operation Agreement Designated Member for this commitment. She confirmed the commitment builds on the Review of Strategic Partnerships undertaken in 2019-2020. The recommendations from that review were clear that it was for local partnerships to lead on aligning partnerships in their area, with Public Services Boards (PSBs) and Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) taking a strategic leadership role. The review also recommended Partnership Council for Wales should periodically review the partnership landscape to consider whether, when and where Welsh Government may need to step in to support local action. In June 2020 the Partnership Council for Wales noted the outcome of that review.
14. The Minister asked for views on the areas for consideration set out at paragraph 17 of the paper. The following key points were raised:
  - South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner Alun Michael commented that this is an important piece of work, and he looked forward to conclusions being reached. He agreed with the basic principle, as referenced in the paper circulated to members, that local areas should be able to design the partnership landscape locally. He referenced three different models of working across the South Wales area. PCC Michael stated that there remains a need for a more joint approach between community safety and safeguarding, with both having the shared aim of making communities safer. He also referred to the Well-being of Future Generations Act as being far-sighted, and noted it is valuable that the Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner are involved in the Public Services Boards (PSB) but highlighted there is no equivalent connection with the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) under the Social Services and Well-being Act. He summarised that he is interested in ensuring there is a clear line of sight and connectivity between partnerships.
  - Councillor Anthony Hunt noted that he is an advocate of locally led regional partnership working and recognises there are structures needed for this to operate. He added that he felt that relationships, at a leadership and operational level, are the most important thing for effectiveness of partnership working.
  - Councillor Huw Thomas referred to work in Cardiff on reviewing partnership priorities and delivery arrangements. He noted that this work had reshaped partnership arrangements around Well-being plans and Area Plans, was removing duplication and making clear what is within the remit of the PSB and what is within the remit of the RPB. He added there is also clarity on oversight arrangements with other partnerships. Cllr Thomas said he would

be happy to share the report on the review with officials and for Welsh Government officials and his officers to discuss.

Councillor Thomas noted he was interested in the question in the paper about Partnership Council's role in driving the recommended actions that emerge from this exercise. He noted that the PSB is a way of working through 'bottle necks' and issues that can only be resolved through partnership, and suggested Partnership Council could operate the same approach on regional partnership working. He noted that if there are key areas of policy challenge identified, Partnership Council (or a sub-group) could develop a shared response.

- Councillor Mark Pritchard commented that trust and avoiding duplication were the key issues for him in effective regional partnership working
- Maria Battle referred specifically to RPBs and noted she would welcome a conversation as part of the evidence gathering for this work. She noted that while she agreed with the principle of the structures of partnership working being designed locally, she felt there is a duty to set certain standards nationally to avoid variation on certain issues. She noted for example that Cardiff and Vale RPB have an excellent outcomes framework which could be replicated across other RPBs. She concluded that there was a case for national government setting frameworks for local design.
- Councillor Sean Morgan noted that he is the new chair of Gwent PSB and that when initially taking up the role he had queried the need for having both a PSB and a RPB, and how closely their ambitions were aligned. He said he can now see there was a case for the two boards and felt that if there was more close working, with a set of shared outcomes, this may be beneficial.

15. The Minister and Cefin Campbell thanked members for their useful feedback and closed the item by confirming that a report setting out key findings, conclusions and recommended actions would be put before Partnership Council for Wales in the summer, for discussion and agreement on the way forward – including the approach to future reviews.

**Action 2:** Secretariat to contact Cllr Huw Thomas to follow-up on his offer of sharing the work Cardiff has undertaken on reviewing and reshaping partnership arrangements.

**Action 3:** Secretariat to request that the team undertaking the Review of Partnerships invites Maria Battle to be interviewed as part of the evidence gathering from key stakeholders

### Agenda item 3: An update on the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill

16. The Minister welcomed the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership, Hannah Blythyn MS, to the meeting to provide an update on the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill (the Bill) which was currently at stage three of the four stage legislative process and, subject to Senedd scrutiny, hoped to receive Royal Assent and become law in April 2023.
17. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership thanked members for the opportunity to update them on progress of the Bill. She felt meetings such as Partnership Council for Wales were an example of social partnership working in practice which was what the Bill seeks to embed across Wales. For the first time by the Welsh Government, the Bill also legislates on procurement which is one of the main levers for improving economic, social, environment and cultural well-being.
18. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership explained to members that the Bill consisted of four main strands. A summary of each is provided below:
  - i. Establishes a **Social Partnership Council for Wales** bringing together Government, employers and worker representatives nominated by the Wales TUC.
  - ii. Places new **Social Partnership Duties** on certain public bodies, including Local Authorities, and to the Welsh Ministers.
  - iii. Amends **section 4 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act by replacing ‘decent work’ with ‘fair work’** within the existing “A prosperous Wales” goal.
  - iv. Creates a **duty for socially responsible public procurement**, which requires specified public bodies, including local authorities, to consider socially responsible public procurement, set objectives in relation to well-being goals, and to publish a procurement strategy.
19. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership confirmed that the Welsh Government would work closely with social partners on the various strands of the Bill, in particular the implementation of the Social Partnership Duty and the Socially Responsible Procurement Duty. The Deputy Minister also confirmed that the Welsh Government would be keen to work with members to develop training and guidance and would invite them to be part of a steering group to cover the development of training and guidance on the Social Partnership Duty in the first instance.
20. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership concluded by thanking everyone for their contribution to the Bill so far and confirmed she would be happy to discuss next steps and implementation with members.
21. The following key points were raised:
  - Members welcomed the Bill in principle and that it put existing arrangements on a statutory footing. Points raised in relation to partnerships across Wales were positive, as it was felt most worked well and were effective.

- Some specific points were raised regarding the procurement strand of the Bill:
  - need to ensure it represents value for money. Understand the importance of social enterprise but there was a responsibility to get best value for money
  - Wales was already doing good work on procurement – some local authorities are working in collaboration.
  - Construction and the elements of the Bill on training and employment law were queried in terms of how they would be taken forward.

22. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership welcomed the discussion and alerted members to the Social Partnership newsletter which they could sign up to for the latest news, updates, policies, events and consultations:

<https://www.gov.wales/subscribe-social-partnership-newsletter>

**Action 4:** Local Authorities to provide the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership with examples of good practice of working together in partnerships and procurement.

#### Agenda item 4: Priorities for Partnership Council for Wales

23. The Minister introduced the final agenda item. She confirmed its purpose was for members to consider priority areas / themes for discussion at future meetings and to ensure Partnership Council for Wales is responsive to emerging issues / priorities as and when they arise throughout the year.

24. The Minister noted previous standing items such the Covid Pandemic and most recently the Cost of Living Crisis, and that the War in Ukraine had also been a priority area for discussion. The Minister noted that having Climate Change as a current standing item sends a strong message about the importance of this work, but asked for members' views on whether it should continue as a standing item or whether any significant updates should be given periodically as and when appropriate. The Minister also commented on the value of today's presentation by the Climate Change Committee and felt that such presentations would be a useful addition in future at appropriate points.

25. The Minister was keen to hear from members if there were other areas / items they would like to see discussed at Partnership Council, or if discussion should be themed on priority issues such as Housing and Planning.

26. The following key points were raised:

- Police and Crime Commissioner Alun Michael suggested it would be helpful to maintain a watching brief on the long term impact of the Cost of Living Crisis, not just in relation to immediate financial issues but the impact on long term behaviours. He also felt it would be useful to consider and explore the long term impact that Covid has had on young people and public behaviour, including potential risks of higher levels of substance misuse and the longer term impact on

public services such as Local Health Boards and Policing. He felt having it as a regular item would enable to Partnership Council for Wales to share the impact as it developed. It would also link into Community Safety and Resilience.

- Maria Battle suggested a discussion around future modelling of climate change and the longer term impact it would have on our communities and Health and Social Care systems which were already under significant strain. Ms Battle stated she would welcome a national discussion about the current position in relation to the Health and Social Care systems which required a whole system approach to leadership.
- Councillor Mark Pritchard noted the ongoing issues relating to recruitment and retention of staff within the sectors and felt it should be considered as part of discussions to Health and Social Care.

27. The Minister thanked members for their comments. She felt there was a clear desire to think more about the longer term having spent the past couple of years reactively dealing with a series of crises. The Minister agreed there was much that Partnership Council for Wales could consider as a group to understand the longer term impacts of the crises, particularly in relation to mitigation and preparedness. The Minister noted the points raised about recruiting and retaining staff and felt it was a challenge for all members and that Partnership Council for Wales should collectively think about that.

28. The Minister informed members that she had invited the Minister for Education and Welsh Language to a future meeting to talk about Cymraeg 2050.

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| <p><b>Action 5:</b> Secretariat to consider the comments and develop a draft forward work plan for Partnership Council for Wales for members to consider.</p> |
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### Concluding remarks

29. The Minister thanked all members for their input to the discussions, and informed members that the next meeting would be held in July, date to be confirmed.



