



Agenda item 5 – Findings from the published Social Partnership reports for 2024-25

SPC Members are asked to

- note the findings from the Social Partnership reports received for 2024-25
- agree any additional information they would like the Secretariat to capture when analysing the Social Partnership reports for 2025-26

Background

1. The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 outlines that a public body must prepare, in respect of each financial year, a report of what it has done to comply with the social partnership duty imposed under the Act.
2. The social partnership duties commenced on 01 April 2024. Public bodies subject to the legislation are now required to seek consensus or compromise with their recognised trade unions (or other representatives of staff where no trade unions are present) when setting their well-being objectives or making decisions of a strategic nature about the steps they intend to take to deliver those objectives.
3. The bodies are now required to publish and provide to the SPC an annual report on compliance with the duty in 24/25. Each report must be agreed with the body's recognised trade unions (or where there is no recognised trade union, other representatives of its staff) or, if has not been agreed, the report must contain a statement explaining why it was not agreed. There is no deadline for the submission of reports.
4. It was agreed at the first meeting of the SPC that these reports would be collated and analysed by the SPC Secretariat, and SPC members would be provided with a summary of the reports received each year.
5. Members also requested additional information to be included in the reports covering 2024-25 to highlight good practice.

6. It is highly unlikely that any further reports for 2024-25 will be received and this paper provides a final analysis based on the submitted reports. All these reports have been shared with SPC members and published on the SPC website.

Final Position – Social Partnership Reports for 2024-25

7. As of 30 September, forty six of the fifty-four public bodies subject to the duty (84%) have published their Social Partnership report for 2024-25. The breakdown is as follows:

Local Authority (22)	20
NHS Bodies (12)	11
Local Government/ CJsCs (4)	1
National Park Authority (3)	2
Fire & Rescue Authority (3)	3
National Bodies (15)	9

The following bodies have neither submitted a report nor provided an explanation of why they consider it is not required for the 2024-25 reporting year:

- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
- Ceredigion County Council
- Corporate Joint Committee Mid Wales
- Corporate Joint Committee North Wales
- Corporate Joint Committee Cardiff Capital Region
- Museum Wales
- Public Health Wales NHS Trust

Bannau Brycheiniog submitted a report but did not publish it as required by the Act.

Findings – Social Partnership Reports 2024-25

Statutory Requirements

8. Almost all bodies provided at least some evidence that they had sought compromise or consensus when setting their well-being objectives and/or taking strategic decisions about taking steps to achieve their objectives. One body had not yet set its well-being objectives for the first time, and two did not report taking any strategic decisions.

9. The most commonly reported strategic decisions that consensus or compromise were sought on were the corporate/ annual plan; budget setting; and the review of well-being objectives.
10. More than half of the reports did not include information about the outcome of the engagement with the recognised trade union(s)/ employee representatives.
11. A significant proportion of reports did not include in the body of the report a statement to confirm that the trade union(s)/ staff representatives had agreed the report. However, this information was subsequently confirmed by email when the Secretariat followed up. One report included a section for comments from their recognised trade unions.
12. Two reports were not agreed with the recognised trade unions, though in both cases, a statement explaining why was included (in compliance with the Act). The reason given in one report being that there were unresolved disputes about terms and conditions, and in the other that the union felt they were informed rather than 'collaborated with' and lacked meaningful input into decision-making.
13. Two bodies used the wording that the trade union/ staff representatives had been 'consulted' on their reports rather than agreed with them. Three bodies stated that their report had been co-produced with their recognised trade unions.
14. There was insufficient evidence provided that trade unions had agreed reports in two cases. One body stated their trade unions had been "involved" with the report, and another only noting the report had been "shared" with their trade unions (without confirming whether any response had been actioned).
15. There was often a lengthy gap between submission to the SPC and publication of the reports. The reports were published in a variety of places on the bodies' websites, generally under either 'Partnership Working' or 'Key Publications', though two reports were integrated into the Annual Report and Well-being Report. However, two bodies published their reports as part of minutes of a meeting rather than as stand-alone documents, and two published theirs under 'Pay Policy'.

Information requested by the SPC

16. The majority of bodies reported that there were meetings (both formal and informal) between employers and trade unions/staff representatives during the reporting period, however, the frequency, subject and quality of discussions was not always clear.

17. Most reports did not provide evidence that training on the Social Partnership duty had been provided. The training that was mentioned is as follows:

- the Welsh Government online training package on Social Partnership and the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act (SPPP Act),
- a short session on Social Partnership provided for the body's trade unions as part of an event,
- internally developed training on the Social Partnership legislation (alongside other subjects) rolled out to managers and senior trade union partners,
- workshops on the requirements of the Social Partnership duty delivered at social partnership meetings,
- a joint refresher workshop on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (WFG Act) for trade union colleagues,
- eLearning being made available on the body's learning platform,
- and a facilitated session provided to all staff with all new starters required to familiarise themselves with the WFG Act and the SPPP Act.

18. Many examples of where social partnership activity was progressing well in the public body were provided. A range of these are set out in Annex A. However, other bodies reported that Social Partnership activity was progressing well without providing specific examples.

Other Findings

19. One body did not have recognised trade unions; however, this body was subsequently dissolved.

20. Most reports were submitted as Word documents/ PDFs, though one was submitted as a PowerPoint presentation. Three were integrated into wider reports.

21. All reports, apart from two, often included extensive information about wider operational matters not caught by the duty (for example, workforce decisions).

22. Several reports alluded to further work in the future to more fully embed social partnership in their strategic decision-making processes.

23. A number of the bodies were set their well-being objectives for the first time during this reporting year and therefore were only required to report on that process.

Conclusions

- As expected for the first year, although there was lots of good practice reported, there was variation in the level of evidence provided and the degree to which TUs (employee representatives for one organisation) had been involved in relevant strategic decision making/understanding of the duty. Some bodies did acknowledge in their reports that they needed to make further progress on this, often including a future action plan which is welcome.
- In particular, inclusion of greater detail on how the process of seeking compromise/consensus was approached and the outcome of those discussions, although not required by the Act, would provide a fuller picture of how well the social partnership duty is being embedded by the public bodies.
- It would also be helpful if there was greater clarity on whether the report had been agreed with the body's trade unions. Inclusion of this information in the body of the report would provide greater transparency.
- Although it is helpful to know that the vast majority of public bodies have regular meetings with their trade unions, there was little meaningful analysis that could be done on the effectiveness of these meetings.
- Inclusion of information about training was patchy and of limited value.

24. It is therefore recommended that the public bodies should be asked to include in their 2025/26 reports (if possible) greater detail on the result of the consultation on strategic decisions, and inclusion of information about the trade union sign off being included in the report.

Next steps/2025-26 reports

25. The new reporting year started on 1st April 2026. Members should be invited to discuss any additional information they would like the public bodies to include in their 25-26 reports. It is suggested that this is limited to no more than 3, to ensure a consistency of approach and that analysis remains focused on agreed key issues.

26. As before, these reports will be circulated to members and findings will be presented at future meetings.

Annex A .

Please see below a list of examples provided in the 2024-25 reports of Social Partnership working/ activity progressing well. Please note this is not an exhaustive list.

- Completed a Social Partnership self-assessment tool in partnership with trade unions which found partnership healthy and strong
- In the process of developing a forward work plan to ensure trade unions are included in strategic processes in a timely manner
- The Joint Consultative Committee which, of the 16 members, comprises of eight Employee Representatives appointed by trade union side
- The Local Partnership Forum provides a structured platform for meaningful dialog with trade unions
- Going forward, the Trade Union Partnership Forum will have dedicated agenda time for the Social Partnership duty
- Engagement with trade unions is now part of the corporate plan development process
- Trade unions were an integral part of creating the 5-year corporate plan, which included its well-being objectives
- Following trade union feedback on the draft Corporate Plan, a subgroup of an existing forum was established to further develop actions on working together to deliver outcomes on sustainable practices
- Trade union representatives delivered a presentation outlining how the organisation works collaboratively as part of the corporate induction programme
- Reintroduced a formal space for trade union colleagues to engage with senior managers in respect of key policies, delivery of robust and balanced budget and key service changes
- Held one hour session with relevant forum for detailed discussion on to discuss and debate on the wording of the body's well-being objectives. "Through this open dialogue, a consensus was reached, resulting in a set of revised wellbeing objectives that better reflected the collective input". Also, a facilitated session was delivered on the SPPP Act to the entire organisation
- Social Partnership duty included as a standing item on the agenda of the joint trade unions/ management forum. In addition, all policies and procedures are highlighted for consultation at that forum before they are approved
- Delivered a Social Partnership Conference, the first of its kind in Wales
- Developed a Social Partnership Action Plan which will lead to greater trade union involvement in wellbeing planning and other social partnership arrangements
- Early establishment of quarterly Partnership Forum which has been utilised to share the detail of operational and business planning, including financial

decisions, resources and governance and discussing our approach and communications with employees

- The chief executive of the organisation meets bi-monthly with TU representatives
- IPA facilitated workshops on understanding the thinking behind the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act (Wales) 2023, the principles of partnership working and identifying any perceived barriers to working in partnership and ideas on how to work through them
- Trade unions are involved in in shaping staff survey questions
- Trade unions were engaged on topics including budgets, corporate plans, strategic planning, new strategies, restructures and service transformation