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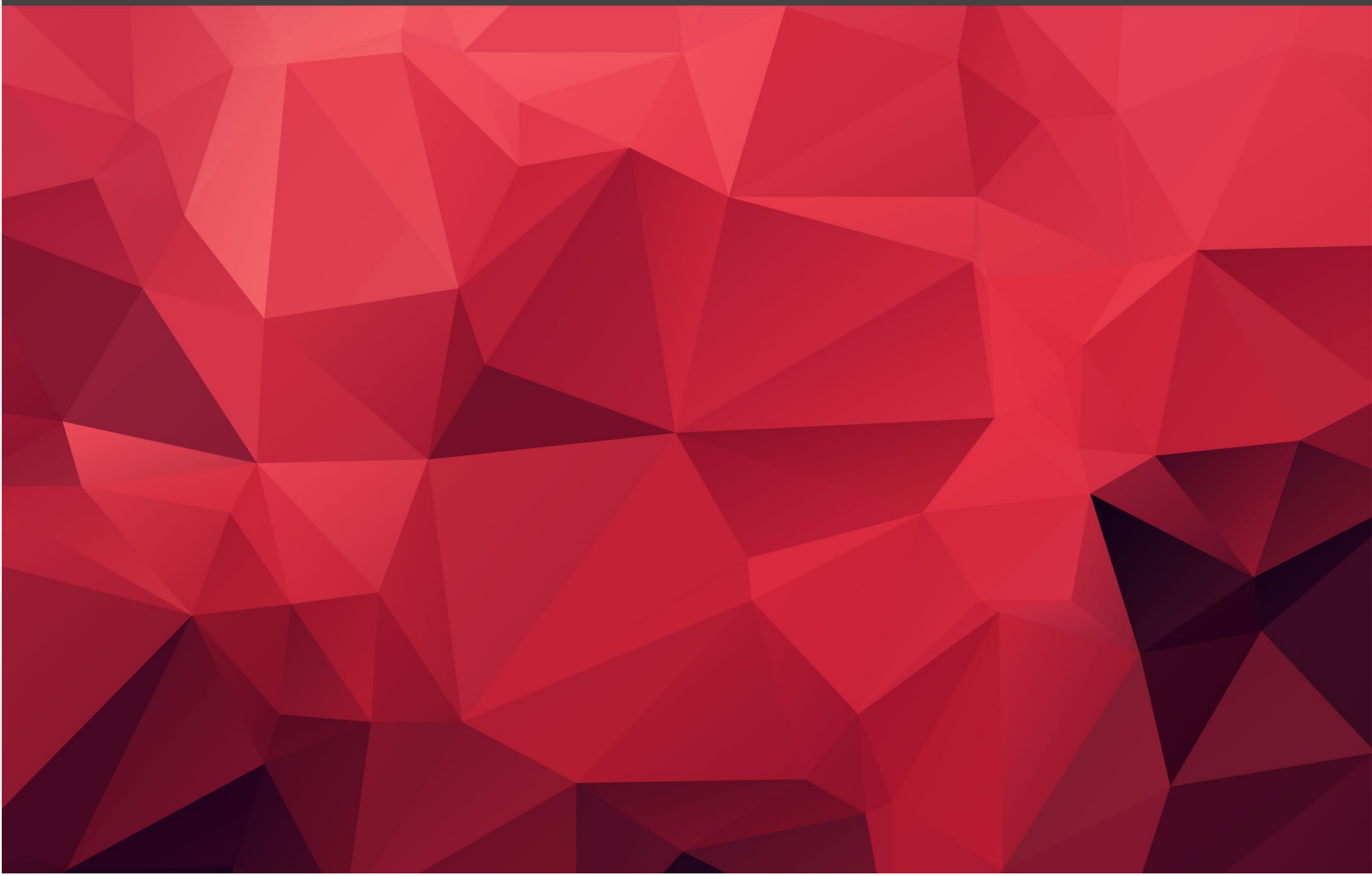
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Auditor General for Wales

Well-being of Future Generations: An examination of ‘Growing Mid Wales is promoted nationally as the vehicle to re-invigorate the local economy’ – **Ceredigion County Council**

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This document is also available in Welsh.

The team who delivered the work comprised Jeremy Evans, Nigel Griffiths and Gareth W Lewis under the direction of Huw Rees.

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Summary report

Summary

Why we undertook the Examination

- 1 In accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) the Auditor General for Wales (the Auditor General) is statutorily required to examine public bodies to assess the extent to which they have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when:
 - a. setting their well-being objectives; and
 - b. taking steps to meet them.

The Act defines the sustainable development principle as acting in a manner: '...which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'

- 2 The Auditor General must provide a report on his examinations to the National Assembly for Wales at least a year before each Assembly election. The first such report must be published by 2020, before the 2021 Assembly election.
- 3 During 2018-19 the Auditor General is undertaking examinations across the 44 bodies covered by the Act to inform his report to the National Assembly.
- 4 In May 2018, the Auditor General published his report, 'Reflecting on Year One – How have public bodies responded to the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)'. He concluded that, public bodies support the principles of the Act and are taking steps to change how they work.
- 5 In developing our approach to undertaking the examinations during 2018-19 we engaged with a range of stakeholders including through our pilot work during 2017-18. We also worked closely with the Future Generations Commissioner.
- 6 As the preliminary work in year one included a consideration of how public bodies had set their well-being objectives the principal focus of this work is the way in which public bodies are taking steps to meet their well-being objectives.
- 7 The findings in this report are based on fieldwork that we undertook during the period October to December 2018.
- 8 This report sets out our findings from our examination of 'Growing Mid Wales is promoted nationally as the vehicle to re-invigorate the local economy, attract inward investment, and boost local employment opportunities', a step the Council is taking to meet its well-being objective 'Enhance prosperity through collaborative and innovative partnership schemes'.
- 9 It also sets out the Council's initial response to our findings.

What we examined

- 10 We examined the extent to which the Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle when promoting Growing Mid Wales nationally as the vehicle to re-invigorate the local economy, attract inward investment, and boost local employment opportunities.
- 11 In order to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle public bodies must take account of the following 'ways of working':

Exhibit 1: the 'five ways of working'

The table below sets out the 'five ways of working' as defined in the Welsh Government's 'Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 The Essentials'¹ document.

The Five Ways of Working
Long-term The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
Prevention How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.
Integration Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
Collaboration Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.
Involvement The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

- 12 Our examination found that: **The Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in setting the 'step' relating to 'Growing Mid Wales' and is taking account of the five ways of working in the actions it is taking to deliver it.**

¹ Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 The Essentials, Welsh Government (2015)

Detailed report

Part 1 – Examination findings

The Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in setting the ‘step’ relating to ‘Growing Mid Wales’ and is taking account of the five ways of working in the actions it is taking to deliver it

The Council understands the need to act now in order to deliver economic growth and increase productivity in the long-term

What we looked for

- 13 We looked for evidence of:
- a thorough understanding of current and long-term needs and the associated challenges and opportunities;
 - planning over an appropriate timescale;
 - resources allocated to ensure long-term benefits; and
 - appropriate monitoring and review.
- 14 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for the ‘long-term’ that we have identified and used as part of this examination.²

What we found

- 15 We identified the following strengths:
- the Growing Mid Wales Partnership (GMWP) is supporting and co-ordinating regional initiatives including Growth Deal, Mid Wales Regional Programme, Connectivity and Infrastructure Group and the Agricultural Futures Innovation;
 - the Council is supporting a range of other short, medium and long-term projects such as the Old College and Strata Florida;
 - there is an understanding between the Council, partners and stakeholders to take action now to deliver economic growth;

² See Appendix 1

- the AECOM³ work looks at interventions over a 15-year timeframe but the nature of the projects suggests they may go beyond that date;
- the Council is restructuring its Economic Development Service to create a dedicated team to support local and regional projects;
- good use of contextual data/trends/projections to inform long-term planning using both:
 - economic; and
 - other data that will impact on this area such as:
 - climate change;
 - ageing population; and
 - technological developments.

16 We did not identify any opportunities for improvement in this area.

The Council has a clear understanding of how local and collaborative projects will help prevent or reduce the issues associated with low levels of economic growth and productivity

What we looked for

- 17 We looked for evidence of:
- a thorough understanding of the nature and type of problem the step could help prevent from occurring or getting worse;
 - resources allocated to ensure preventative benefits will be delivered; and
 - monitoring and review of how effectively the step is preventing problems from occurring or getting worse.
- 18 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for ‘prevention’ that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁴

What we found

- 19 We identified the following strengths:
- the Growing Mid Wales programme has been designed to prevent a number of problems from occurring or getting worse;

³ AECOM is a global network of experts working with clients, communities and colleagues to develop and implement innovative solutions to the world’s most complex challenges www.AECOM.com

⁴ See Appendix 1

- the Council knows that without an increase in economic growth there is a high likelihood Ceredigion and the Mid Wales region will face a downward economic spiral; and
 - there is a clear ‘prevention’ agenda for example:
 - prevent young people leaving, prevent the region being seen as ‘the bit in the middle’, prevent the area being seen as poor and of little value to potential investors, reducing poverty and improving community resilience.
- 20 We identified the following opportunity for improvement:
- whilst the AECOM work is underway and the GMWP have not yet agreed the interventions and business cases, the Council could start to think more about the outcome measures it needs to assure itself that its actions are preventing problems from occurring or getting worse.

The Council is ensuring that the Growing Mid Wales initiative is integrated with its own plans, those of its partners and national well-being goals

What we looked for

- 21 We looked for evidence of consideration of:
- how this step could contribute to the seven national well-being goals;
 - how delivery of this step will impact on the Council's well-being objectives and wider priorities; and
 - how delivery of this step will impact on other public bodies' well-being objectives.
- 22 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for ‘integration’ that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁵

What we found

- 23 We identified the following strengths:
- the Council's Corporate Strategy 2017-22 outlines how its priorities contribute to the seven National Well-being goals, their Well-being Objectives and associated projects;
 - the PSB's Well-being Plan 2018-23 links its aims to the objectives of its statutory partners and Welsh Government;

⁵ See Appendix 1

- economic growth is the focus of the Corporate Strategies and Regeneration Strategies for Ceredigion and Powys County Councils and the two Public Service Boards Well-being Plans; and
- the GMWP has a clear, shared vision across Mid Wales – the vision goes beyond the two Councils and reaches across higher education and the private sector.

24 We did not identify any opportunities for improvement in this area.

The Council is collaborating widely with its partners and stakeholders in the planning and delivery of the Growing Mid Wales initiative

What we looked for

25 We looked for evidence that the Council:

- has considered how it could work with others to deliver the step (to meet its well-being objectives, or assist another body to meet its well-being objectives);
- is collaborating effectively to deliver the step; and
- is monitoring and reviewing whether the collaboration is helping it or its stakeholders meet well-being objectives.

26 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'collaboration' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁶

What we found

27 We identified the following strengths:

- a key objective of the GMWP is developing a collaborative approach and consensus on shared priorities;
- relationships with private sector organisations are being developed through high level contact from the Council. Strong, regular dialogue is taking place between the Council and the private sector;
- the GMWP includes significant membership from the private sector, as well as higher education, the voluntary sector and local government; and
- the GMWP work on the Growth Bid, Freight Strategy, ESIF Bids, Strength in Places Fund, Employment and Skills Plan and the Communications Strategy exemplifies collaboration among a large number of partners.

28 We identified the following opportunities for improvement:

⁶ See Appendix 1

- there are differences in the approach to collaboration taken by Ceredigion and Powys County Councils. Both councils could consider the benefits and disbenefits of the different models and think about working together to unify their approach; and
- as the project develops the Council needs to consider how more advanced collaborative activity such as pooling budgets/sharing posts could bring benefit.

The Council involved partners, stakeholders and citizens during the development of the well-being objective and the actions taken to deliver it

What we looked for

- 29 We looked for evidence that the Council has:
- identified who it needs to involve in designing and delivering the step;
 - effectively involved key stakeholders in designing and delivering the step;
 - used the results of involvement to shape the development and delivery of the step; and
 - sought to learn lessons and improve its approach to involvement.
- 30 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'involvement' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁷

What we found

- 31 We identified the following strengths:
- the Council has identified and involved a wide range of public and private sector partners to assist in delivering the Growing Mid Wales initiative;
 - AECOM has employed a range of methods to engage effectively with local businesses in order to involve them in the development of the Regional Economic Action Plan; and
 - the Council has plans to involve the private and public sector once the list of interventions to generate economic growth has been finalised.
- 32 We identified the following opportunity for improvement:
- the Council could provide more information to councillors to enable them to act as ambassadors for the Growing Mid Wales initiative and open the project to more external challenge and scrutiny; and
 - involve the wider population seeking their view on the future for the region.

⁷ See Appendix 1

Part Two: Council's response

- 33 Following the conclusion of our fieldwork we presented our findings to senior officers of the Council at a workshop in March 2019. At this workshop the Council began to consider its response to our findings and as a result of discussions at the workshop, and further reflection on our findings, the Council has developed the following actions under specific themes.

Long-term
Maintain attention on economic developments and changes to ensure that the programme continues to be relevant to the current context.
Prevention
Continue developing measures to support the strategic business cases.
Integration
Consider further recognition of the contribution this step will make to health and social care well-being objectives of the Council and its health partners.
Collaboration
Undertake dialogue with Powys County Council to move toward a more consistent single approach.
Develop regional capacity to work together with one approach to bring forward more advanced activities and work packages to deliver the regional strategic agenda.
Involvement
Deliver more information workshops for councillors to convey the high level ambitions and goals for Growing Mid Wales.
Develop a broad programme to involve the diversity of the population in shaping the future for the region
Corporate
Develop a system to provide assurance at a corporate level if the Council is considering the five ways of working in the actions to deliver the well-being objectives.
Develop a process to take the learning and embed it across the Council.

- 34 We will continue to monitor the Council's progress in implementing these actions, and the extent to which they address the issues we have identified in our findings.

Appendix 1

Positive Indicators of the Five Ways of Working

The table below sets out 'positive indicators' for each of the five ways of working that we have identified and will use to help inform our assessments of the extent to which bodies may be applying the sustainable development principle (SDP). We do not intend to use the indicators as a 'checklist'. They should be viewed as 'indicators' that will help us to form conclusions, rather than 'determinants' of the extent to which a body is acting in accordance with the SDP in taking steps to meet its wellbeing objectives.

Exhibit 1: Positive indicators of the five ways of working

What would show a body is fully applying the long-term way of working?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a clear understanding of what 'long-term' means in the context of the Act.• They have designed the step to deliver the well-being objective(s) and contribute to their long-term vision.• They have designed the step to deliver short or medium-term benefits, which are balanced with the impact over the long-term (within the project context).• They have designed the step based on a sophisticated understanding of current and future need and pressures, including analysis of future trends.• Consequently, there is a comprehensive understanding of current and future risks and opportunities.• Resources have been allocated to ensure long-term as well as short-term benefits are delivered.• There is a focus on delivering outcomes, with milestones/progression steps identified where outcomes will be delivered over the long-term.• They are open to new ways of doing things which could help deliver benefits over the longer term.• They value intelligence and pursue evidence-based approaches.
What would show a body is fully applying the preventative way of working?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The body seeks to understand the root causes of problems so that negative cycles and intergenerational challenges can be tackled.• The body sees challenges from a system-wide perspective, recognising and valuing the long-term benefits that they can deliver for people and places.• The body allocates resources to preventative action that is likely to contribute to better outcomes and use of resources over the longer-term, even where this may limit the ability to meet some short-term needs.• There are decision-making and accountability arrangements that recognise the value of preventative action and accept short-term reductions in performance and resources in the pursuit of anticipated improvements in outcomes and use of resources.

What would show a body is taking an 'integrated' approach?

- Individuals at all levels understand their contribution to the delivery of the vision and well-being objectives.
- Individuals at all levels understand what different parts of the organisation do and proactively seek opportunities to work across organisational boundaries. This is replicated in their work with other public bodies.
- Individuals at all levels recognise the cross-organisation dependencies of achieving the ambition and objectives.
- There is an open culture where information is shared.
- There is a well-developed understanding of how the well-being objectives and steps to meet them impact on other public sector bodies.
- Individuals proactively work across organisational boundaries to maximise their contribution across the well-being goals and minimise negative impacts.
- Governance, structures and processes support this, as do behaviours.

What would show a body is collaborating effectively?

- The body is focused on place, community and outcomes rather than organisational boundaries.
- The body has a good understanding of partners' objectives and their responsibilities, which helps to drive collaborative activity.
- The body has positive and mature relationships with stakeholders, where information is shared in an open and transparent way.
- The body recognises and values the contributions that all partners can make.
- The body seeks to establish shared processes and ways of working, where appropriate.

What would show a body is involving people effectively?

- Having an understanding of who needs to be involved and why.
- Reflecting on how well the needs and challenges facing those people are currently understood.
- Working co-productively, working with stakeholders to design and deliver.
- Seeing the views of stakeholders as a vital source of information that will help deliver better outcomes.
- Ensuring that the full diversity of stakeholders is represented and they are able to take part.
- Having mature and trusting relationships with its stakeholders where there is ongoing dialogue and information is shared in an open and transparent way.
- Ensure stakeholders understand the impact of their contribution.
- Seek feedback from key stakeholders which is used to help learn and improve.

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