

Email sent to matht4@gmail.com

16/02/2017

Dear Matthew Taylor,

Thank you for your recent email concerning the proposals that Newport City Council have made to end subsidies for the X16 bus service which currently serves Marshfield, as part of their 2017-18 draft budget proposals.

It is important that I am aware of instances where citizens use the Well-being of Future Generations Act to influence public bodies in their decision making. I have noted the proposals in the document you sent me, and have suggested questions you could ask of Newport City Council to ensure that they are making decisions in accordance with legal requirements.

As Future Generations Commissioner, I have a general duty to promote the sustainable development principle (the five ways of working) set out in the legislation, in particular to act as a guardian of the ability of future generations to meet their needs, and to encourage public bodies to take greater account of the long-term impact of the things that they do. In exercising these duties, I have to be mindful of a range of issues.

Unlike other Commissioners in Wales I do not have express statutory powers to instigate or undertake case work. I do not have express enforcement powers and we are not an extra layer of appeal in the planning process (there are the Planning Inspectorate in Welsh Government and the Public Service Ombudsman).

My only express power is to conduct a review, but this is designed within the legislative framework of the Act to provide insight to me so that I can help the public body to improve the way in which they look at the long term impact of their decisions (in general) and maximise their contribution to the well-being goals set out in the legislation. You can see that this is designed to help in the future – it has no impact on any decision already taken, I cannot ask a decision to be changed. I can recommend a future change in the process leading to a public body's decision but I cannot influence the outcome of decisions at any given time.

I am monitoring all of the correspondence I receive to see whether it illustrates broader strategic or system-wide issues and, subject to resources being available, I may consider undertaking work in a way which identifies lessons to be learnt in order to disseminate to other public bodies, to improve policy making and practice. Therefore, as well as providing my views on how your community could use the legislation, I have recorded your concerns and will continue to monitor all correspondence I receive to seek to detect any systemic issue which can arise here and which might trigger my review power.

I am also paying close attention to how bodies are responding to the requirements of the Act, both through responding to the Well-being Assessments that are being prepared by Public Services Boards and reviewing the well-being objectives which each public body is required to set.

I would suggest that you remind Newport Council that they are under a statutory duty under the Well-being of Future Generations Act to carry out sustainable development and to take account of the five ways of working detailed in the Act, which includes a requirement to, when making a decision, involve people affected by that decision.

The Act requires public bodies to set well-being objectives that enable them to maximise their contribution to the seven well-being goals which are:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

Newport City Council have recently held a public consultation on 'One Newport' their local Well-being Plan, which sets out a picture of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being for Newport area now and into the future. The plan is available at <http://onewportlsb.newport.gov.uk/oneNewport/About-One-Newport/Wellbeing-of-Future-Generations-Act/Local-Assessment-of-Wellbeing.aspx> You may be interested to see that there are reports for 20 community areas of Newport (the report for Marshfield is here - <http://onewportlsb.newport.gov.uk/documents/One-Newport/Marshfield-Profile-Consultation-Draft.pdf>)

The Act also requires public bodies to take account of five ways of working, and below I have suggested some points that it may be useful for you to suggest that Newport Council should consider.

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.

- How are the people who will be affected by the decisions in relation the Council's draft budget being involved, and how is the Council ensuring a diverse range of people are being involved?
- How is the Council ensuring that they are not just consulting for consultations' sake: how are they responding to what people and communities say?

Long Term - The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.

- How will the approach that the Council is proposing improve the well-being of the people of Marshfield in the long term?
- How will it affect what Marshfield looks and feels like in the year 2040 (25 years' time)?

Prevention - How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.

- How will the approach that the Council is proposing prevent problems that the local community faces? For example, if a decision could provide opportunities for people to access learning, it could help build peoples' skills and prevent underemployment; or if a decision could provide opportunities for elderly people to socialise, it could help prevent loneliness and isolation.

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.

- How has the Council thought about how their decision will impact on economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being – it cannot focus on one of these areas, at the expense of the others.

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.

- Has the Council thought about how it could work in collaboration with other organisations in making this decision? I liked your suggestions about Newport Council thinking about how they could work with Cardiff Council, as Marshfield is equidistant between Newport and Cardiff.

For my office these ways of working are the most important part of the Act, as they are about how public bodies need to work differently to make better decisions for future generations.

It might be fruitful for you to write to Newport County Council, saying that you have sought my advice and asking how they have taken account of the five ways of working (as outlined above) I would be interested to hear what response you receive and how the decision evolves.

Thank you again for getting in touch about this issue. I hope that the information I have provided is helpful and I would be interested to hear what happens next.



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