

18.1.2022

Wellbeing Objective: Strong Economy

The (draft) delivery plan for this Objective, produced for July 2021's PSB considered the impact that the Covid-19 has had, and continues to have, on this objective and the ability to deliver on both the shorter-term outputs and longer-term outcomes.

Identified 'quick wins' for the 2021-22 PSB year were to:

1. Regional approach and cross promotion of Valleys Gateways sites in the region: Cyfarthfa Park, Ynysangharad Park and Dare Valley Park.
2. Looking at how the Employability Pledge can be implemented to support economic recovery in the region
3. Progressing on the work started with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies and getting buy-in / long term commitment regarding changing procurement practices. Using Atamis information from CLES looking at local spend and leakage.
4. Considering and preparing for the impact of furloughing in the Region.

Progress:

1. Phil Lewis of the VRP gave a presentation at PSB in July 2021 which prompted discussion on how we could work together to deliver on the wellbeing plan priorities, influence the development of policies and funding priorities as the new Programme for Government takes shape and what opportunities are there to develop the regional partnership to share best practice in a way that supports Covid recovery and Brexit mitigation plans. The presentation and VRP delivery plan were shared with Members following the meeting.
2. Colleagues involved in designing and driving the Employability Pledge have been involved in PHW's 'Fair Work for Health, Well-being and Equity' panel which also touches on reducing social and economic inequalities. The background for this panel is that work and working conditions are critical determinants of health, and a healthy engaged workforce contributes to business productivity and societal prosperity. Participation in fair work provides a sense of purpose and means that people have money and resources for a healthy life for them and their families. This reduces psychological stress, creates a stepping-stone out of poverty and helps children have the best start in life. Fair work can contribute to an economy of well-being, improving outcomes for the whole population, including those most disadvantaged. Ciarán Humphreys, consultant in public health, provided an update on the work at the Bridgend PSB meeting in December 2021, with the recommendation being that PSB consider how its work supports participation in fair work in a way that will improve health, well-being, and equity and what additional support would be of value as well-being assessments and plans are developed.
It is believed that aligning the work of the Pledge to this panel would be of mutual benefit, especially in the context of the pandemic and associated control measures which disrupted working lives and opportunities to participate in fair work. Some groups have been particularly affected, such as young people, older people, those from disadvantaged backgrounds, women, especially mothers, and ethnic minority groups.

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The pandemic exacerbated pre-existing inequities in participation in fair work and health, while bringing new challenges of its own. Whereas the forecasted levels of unemployment due to the pandemic have not materialised, ensuring those experiencing disadvantage have access to fair work remains an essential way of improving long term health and well-being of individuals and households, including for children.

3. The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) work in Cwm Taf Morgannwg is a regional approach to strengthening the foundational economy and building resilience in the local supply chain. Work has concentrated on understanding procurement barriers and supporting collaboration on funding bids. Colleagues involved in the work have found the opportunity to network with counterparts in other organisations useful and have learned from each other's practices. The more recent Health Board involvement has further strengthened it from the perspective of managing being part of a structure but opportunities for local spend / contracts.

One of the last sessions with CLES brought together social enterprises with colleagues from public sector, Welsh Government, and the Wales Cooperative to talk about their experiences as SEs working in the region and managing procurement rules and frameworks.

There is an online dissemination event today (18 January) to share the wider learning from the programme, with a specific focus on the three themes which were common across more than one PSB cluster:

- Food procurement
- Construction and retrofit
- Enhancing opportunities for SMEs and social business.

We will be re-convening the regional Cwm Taf Morgannwg working group in the coming few weeks.

4. The topic of furlough was considered in the PSB's Community Impact Assessment and engagement has continued through the 'Protect' workstream established as part of the regional 'Test, Trace, Protect' structure and the review into mental health provision undertaken in spring 2021. It is also something we are considering in the current work on the assessment, both in terms of data and engagement.

Managing and preparing for the impact of Covid on society in the context of the ongoing pandemic is still an area where the PSB has been on the periphery.

The Delivery Plan also highlights that we are not starting from scratch. The pandemic disrupted plans but also created opportunities, shifted priorities and showed what can be possible. Developing a short to medium term development plan for the Tourism Sector that allows us to test and develop growth models was also something highlighted in the delivery plan for this PSB year.