

National Assembly for Wales Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee CELG(4) LGC (06)

Inquiry into Progress with local government collaboration

Response from: Powys County Council

INQUIRY INTO THE PROGRESS WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION

Powys County Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the National Assembly for Wales Inquiry into the progress with local government collaboration.

The Council has already responded to the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery, as part of a joint response made together with Powys Local Service Board members. A significant part of the Powys Local Service Board response focussed on the central nature of collaborative work and some of that is repeated in the response below.

This response is structured in accordance with the terms of reference as requested by the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, following some key observations about the conditions for successful collaboration.

Collaboration creates an environment that allows for the use of collective knowledge, resources and skills. Powys along with other local authorities in Wales has been achieving common goals including efficiency gains for some time.

Effective collaboration requires strong leadership, communication and communication technology, definition of responsibilities and an encouraging culture. Collaboration is most effective when members exhibit the right behaviours, are expressive and open to positive competition and active engagement. It is recognised that the benefits of collaboration outweigh the productivity of a single local authorities effort however structural change can diminish effort away from such activity because of the significant investment in time and effort that structural change can take.

Powys has a strong history of working collaboratively both with key partners within the authority and regional and inter-authority arrangements (see examples in Appendix 1).

1. The extent to which the Welsh Government's collaboration agenda has been taken forward within local authorities

1.1 Collaborative and Partnership working is well established. The county has 12 unitary neighbours, two of them English, and 110 town and

community councils operating within its boundaries. The council has built up expertise in dealing with a multiplicity of organisations/entities of differing scales, providing a range of different services. While recognising that we still have some way to go, staff both within the council and within the Powys LSB organisations have developed skills and acumen to deal effectively with the particular collaborative working conditions of this area (see some examples in Appendix 1 below).

- 1.2 Powys is policed by the Dyfed Powys Police Force and is bordered by four other forces, one of them English. It is part of the Mid and West Wales Fire Service area, with four others operating on its border, again two of them are English fire services. Unlike most Welsh councils (other than Monmouthshire, Wrexham and Flintshire), Powys shares sizable borders with England, spanning Shropshire and Herefordshire. This has significant implications to patient flows but affects other issues such as education and regeneration and means the council works across boundaries both within, but also outside Wales.
- 1.3 Recognising that the priorities of public services need to be shared between local and national partners and focus on the outcomes for residents and communities locally, Powys was one of the first local authorities to agree a single delivery plan (the One Plan). Locally developed and shared outcomes ensure that service delivery reflects the needs of the local community.

2. The structural, political and practical barriers to successful collaboration

- 2.1 Where organisations are servicing the same customer groups and can therefore agree on common aims and objectives it greatly improves the opportunity for collaboration and design / commissioning of shared service delivery processes which can improve service standards and reduce costs.
- 2.2 Effective collaboration has reduced blame passing and cost shunting. However, meeting perceived regulatory and legal governance requirements in risk averse organisations makes collaboration less likely to happen. Further development of, and commitment to, the LSB approach from all public sector bodies will help.
- 2.3 Co-terminosity greatly helps collaboration on many customer facing services as there is the inherent benefit of common customer needs / groups.
- 2.4 Collaboration is also possible with national organisations but they need to also have a shared vision / direction. The NHS has a number of 'national' services that could greatly benefit the wider public sector but they don't have a clear remit / mandate to be a public sector rather than health service provider.

- 3. The models of governance and accountability adopted when collaboration takes place**
- 3.1.1 The LSB is well established; the membership of which has been recently reviewed and amended. There is also agreement in principle to move to a single integrated plan between the organisations making up the LSB (see Performance section above).
- 3.1.2 The Council is involved in regional working such as SWAMWAC (to become ERW) relating to education regional working and has joint working arrangements with Ceredigion County Council with whom the Council is involved in a number of collaborative projects (eg CWIC – Central Wales in Collaboration). Officers are involved in a range of other collaborations. For example the Chief Executive leads on regional working in relation to Social Services. Powys and Ceredigion County Councils examined the feasibility of joining their Social Services Departments. Significant elements of this project are proceeding but the feasibility of having a single joint Director of Social Services proved to be unviable. The council is currently collaborating with Ceredigion Education Service in order to address issues raised by Estyn about Powys' Education Service.
- 3.3.1 Collaborative working has necessitated a co-ordination of decision making between the Council and other Councils' Cabinets to ensure that timescales are met. Collaboration between the Education Services of Powys and Ceredigion are resulting in improvements being achieved to address concerns raised by regulators. Progress is also being monitored by the Council's People Scrutiny Committee with officers from Ceredigion attending Working Group meetings to discuss the achievement of the action plan with scrutiny members. The Project Board established in consultation with Welsh Government and Ceredigion County Council to monitor improvements in education in Powys reports to the County Council on progress made and provides an assurance to the Council that improvements are being made.
- 3.3.2 Joint Cabinet Committees and Joint Scrutiny arrangements have not been initiated as yet, but discussions have started as to how such arrangements could be established e.g. in relation to CWIC collaborative projects.
- 3.3.3 Joint Cabinet meetings take place on specific issues eg social care
- 3.5 One of the most developed collaborative partnerships is between the Council and Powys Teaching Health Board, the only fully coterminous public sector organisation. The two bodies have been working together on a number of significant projects for sometime. The two organisations looked closely at merger in the recent past but were stalled in large part because of statutory conditions. With appropriate

support and a more solution oriented focus this could provide an optimal service model redesign prospect for Powys in the future.

4. The overall costs and benefits of collaborating to deliver local government services

- 4.1.1 Services do not all need to be delivered locally and some can clearly be delivered more cost effectively on a collaborative/regional/national basis. To reduce complexity we need clearer decision making about what will be done nationally so that local resources can be more focussed.
- 4.1.2 Collaboration has been used with both local and national partners to both improve services and increase value of money by making more effective use of shared resources, reducing duplication of tasks, eliminating gaps between organisations, increasing buying power etc.
- 4.1.3 It is not always successful and the investment can outweigh the benefits.
- 4.1.4 Collaboration is most effective when done more strategically and needs to be more targeted in its application. Without clear national direction on where services will be developed nationally and where cross sector collaboration is expected locally we are likely to continue to have very variable results. Clear direction on Health and social care collaboration in particular would be helpful.
- 4.1.5 For example, the council and health board have also been sharing ICT services with integrated email and backroom functions to improve efficiency and reduce budget pressures. In July 2012 the two organisations signed a landmark agreement - known as a Section 33 agreement - providing clarity and a pooled budget where needed to make the arrangements more accountable and sustainable for the future.
- 4.1.6 The agreement enables Health Board and the Council to share and manage ICT jointly. By combining resources and increasing our critical mass we have been able to keep services within Powys and to improve the quality of our existing services.

APPENDIX 1: Powys Examples of Collaborative Working

The following are just a few examples of collaboration and partnership currently taking place.

- **Integrated Family Support Service and Families First**
As part of a 4 authority partnership, we have implemented an Integrated Families Support Service (IFSS) which provides intense levels of support being put in place to those families within Powys who are affected by substance and alcohol

misuse problems. The service was established within the developmental timescales required.

In addition we also work through the same partnership on early intervention and prevention services under the Families First programme. The main stay of this work is through the delivery of collaborative learning sets.

- **Regional Social Services Collaborative**
The Chief Executive of PCC currently chairs the Mid and West Wales Health and Social Services Collaborative which is in the midst of recruiting a Regional Co-ordinator to drive forward a number of strands of work.
- **Powys Social Services Collaboration with Ceredigion**
A decision by both Powys and Ceredigion Councils to proceed with collaboration primarily in the areas of commissioning and workforce development was made in early April 2013. a full part, with other Directors of Social Services,
- **Central Wales Infrastructure Collaboration (CWIC)**
Powys is embarking on a regional collaboration to deliver property and engineering services to help maintain and (in some areas improve) service quality and resilience. The aim is to create a regional management structure that will generate deep rooted, joint working between Powys County Council (PCC) & Ceredigion County Council (CCC). Where practical, we will also align policies and practices, improve services through reducing duplication and release financial savings through merging roles and making efficiencies for both councils.
- **Central Wales Waste Partnership (CWWP) Board**
Powys through CWWP is developing a proposal to formalise the current activities of the CWWP and to seek agreement to further collaborate in waste.
- **Regional Adoption Board**
We are currently working with our partners across Mid and West Wales to deliver a regional adoption service as part of the delivery model for the national adoption service as agreed by the WLGA, WG and ADSS Cymru
- **Schools Service Regional Collaboration**
Collaboration with Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and Pembrokeshire has been ongoing for 10 years. The focus has been to establish an integrated school improvement service across the six consortium authorities. Although SWAMWAC is no more a newly branded Education through Regional Working (ERW) is due to be launched on the 3rd July 2013.

Collaborative Procurement

- We have, in collaboration with members of the consortium and national health organisations, specified and started the procurement of a replacement system to the current DRAIG system which is expected to come to the end of its contract March 2016.
- Since the introduction of the new energy partnership, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Powys have also joined the energy consortium. WPC independent customers also participate and account for approximately 10% of the overall Welsh Purchasing Consortium, thus further promoting the Welsh collaboration agenda: South Wales Police, Dyfed Powys Police, Gwent Police,

South Wales Fire Service, Mid and West Wales Fire Service, University of Glamorgan, Newport University, Wales Millennium Centre.

- Welsh Purchasing Consortium (WPC), Local authorities: Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Neath Port Talbot, Newport, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea, Torfaen and Vale of Glamorgan. The WPC has introduced an Associate Member Scheme which is available to other organisations within the Welsh public sector.
- **Local Resilience Forum** Regional collaboration is already a strong feature of the county council's operation particularly in the vital area of emergency planning. The council is an active and important member of the local resilience forum which covers the Dyfed Powys Police Force area. The forum is a successful example of cross border, multi-agency working developed over considerable time to respond to emergency incidents.

The work of the LRF's allow the different organisations to co-operate and plan for the most serious of situations while maintaining individual identities and the ability to maintain local service delivery and accountability.

Collaborative work involving children and young people

Here are just a few examples:-

- An Integrated Disability Service for Children and Young People with an inter-agency Manager and real and virtual resources aligned to an integrated care pathway.
- An Integrated Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service for Children and Young People that supports the strategy together for Mental Health requirements of the Welsh Government The key actions of Together for Mental Health include the promotion of positive mental health, development of resilience, managing transitions, the avoidance of stigma and recovery and enablement and we have some innovative use of technology examples as well as traditional therapeutic approaches that are achieving positive outcomes for young people.
- An integrated early intervention and prevention service that provides:-
 - 0-11 Family and Behaviour Support Service which has been jointly commissioned using partnership resource.
 - 11-25 Youth Support Service which provides targeted support along side mainstream Youth Service activity.
- Integrated Family Support Service - providing intensive family support services using evidence based practice.
- The development of a whole systems approach to Team Around the Family including the current development of a Single Point of Access to a range of early and statutory interventions services.
- Carers support service which is jointly commissioned across Adults and Children's Social Care as well as the wider Children and Young People's Partnership.
- An independent Advocacy Service that is funded between Health, Education and Children's Social Services and has been identified by the Children's Commissioner as an example of good practice.

