



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

STATEMENT OF WELLBEING

2017-2022



Long-term



Prevention



Integration



Collaboration



Involvement



1. Foreword

- 1.1. On behalf of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council I am pleased to present our fourth Statement of Wellbeing which sets out our local wellbeing objectives for the community from 2017 to 2022. The objectives were developed in readiness for the launch of the plan in 2017 with over a year of careful consideration for the communities of Merthyr Tydfil, our regional and national position. The exercise included extensive consultation and engagement with communities and other stakeholders.
- 1.2. Over the past two years the Council has changed how it works in order to better deliver these objectives. In doing so, we continue to capture key learning points and streamline our processes to become further focused on the outcomes that came from our stakeholder engagement and consultation. As stated last year, our objectives have not changed but have become more focused. I remain confident that our wellbeing objectives lay the foundation for an effective Council Plan.
- 1.3. Our wellbeing objectives seek to secure sustained improvements in the economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of the people who live and work in Merthyr Tydfil, now and in the future. The focus remains being on supporting people when they need it most and equipping them with the skills they need to lead fulfilled lives. This will be done by changing our approach to focus on the five ways of working as stated in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 1.4. Our wellbeing objectives have been prepared and are being delivered in a time of challenge and change. Doing different things, making better use of our assets and working smarter, not harder has never been so important. The Council intends to make effective use of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to safeguard the wellbeing of Merthyr Tydfil now and for the future.
- 1.5. The Act presents us with an opportunity to work differently when delivering our Corporate Wellbeing Plan. We will do this by utilising the five ways of working and ensuring the seven wellbeing goals are always at the heart of what we do.
- 1.6. The publication of this statement and Corporate Wellbeing Plan (Focus on the Future: Wellbeing in Our Community) is made during the worldwide corona virus crisis. As such some elements may be revisited later in the year with further enhancements.



Ellis Cooper
Interim Chief Executive
MTCBC

2. Introduction

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- 2.1. The Act is about improving the economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of Wales. For the first time in law, public bodies have a common purpose and a national shared vision.
- 2.2. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals to ensure we are all working towards achieving the shared vision. Each of the goals has a descriptor to build a common understanding ([Appendix I](#)).
- 2.3. The Act places a legal duty on public bodies to adopt the sustainable development principle when setting wellbeing objectives and in taking steps to meet those objectives. In the Act, the sustainable development principle¹ is exemplified by the five ways of working ([Appendix II](#)).

Wellbeing Statement

- 2.4. In our wellbeing statement we set out the scope of each wellbeing objective. In doing so we outline why we consider meeting the objective will maximise our contribution to the achievement of the seven wellbeing goals.
- 2.5. The wellbeing statement clearly communicates the connections between each of our wellbeing objectives. This helps us secure an integrated and collaborative approach to achieving all seven wellbeing goals.
- 2.6. In the long term, our wellbeing objectives seek to ensure we secure improvements across all four pillars of wellbeing (economic, social, cultural and environmental) for the people who live and work in Merthyr Tydfil now and in the future.

¹ The sustainable development principle sets out five ways of working to help us work together better, avoid repeating past mistakes and tackle some of the long-term challenges we face.

The Sustainable Development Principle

- 2.7. As a public body, we need to make sure that the way we work aligns to the sustainable development principle. How we have applied this principle when setting and reviewing our objectives has included:



Involvement

The involvement of people who visit, live and work in Merthyr Tydfil as we carried out our wellbeing assessment. Local involvement was focused on understanding personal wellbeing and generating strength based intelligence by asking questions such as "What is good in your communities?" and "What would make your communities better?"



Collaboration

We collaborated with senior officers across the Council when analysing the assessment information and developing the wellbeing objectives. This is helping us to grow awareness and practical experience of the 5 ways of working across services.



Integration

Integration of resources within the Council to maximise the collective skills, knowledge and understanding to help build wellbeing objectives that are commonly understood.



Prevention

Reducing the possibility of silo working by involving all services that can contribute to the achievement of a wellbeing objective has helped us work better together, ensured a focus on prevention, and decision making that is more integrated and collaborative.

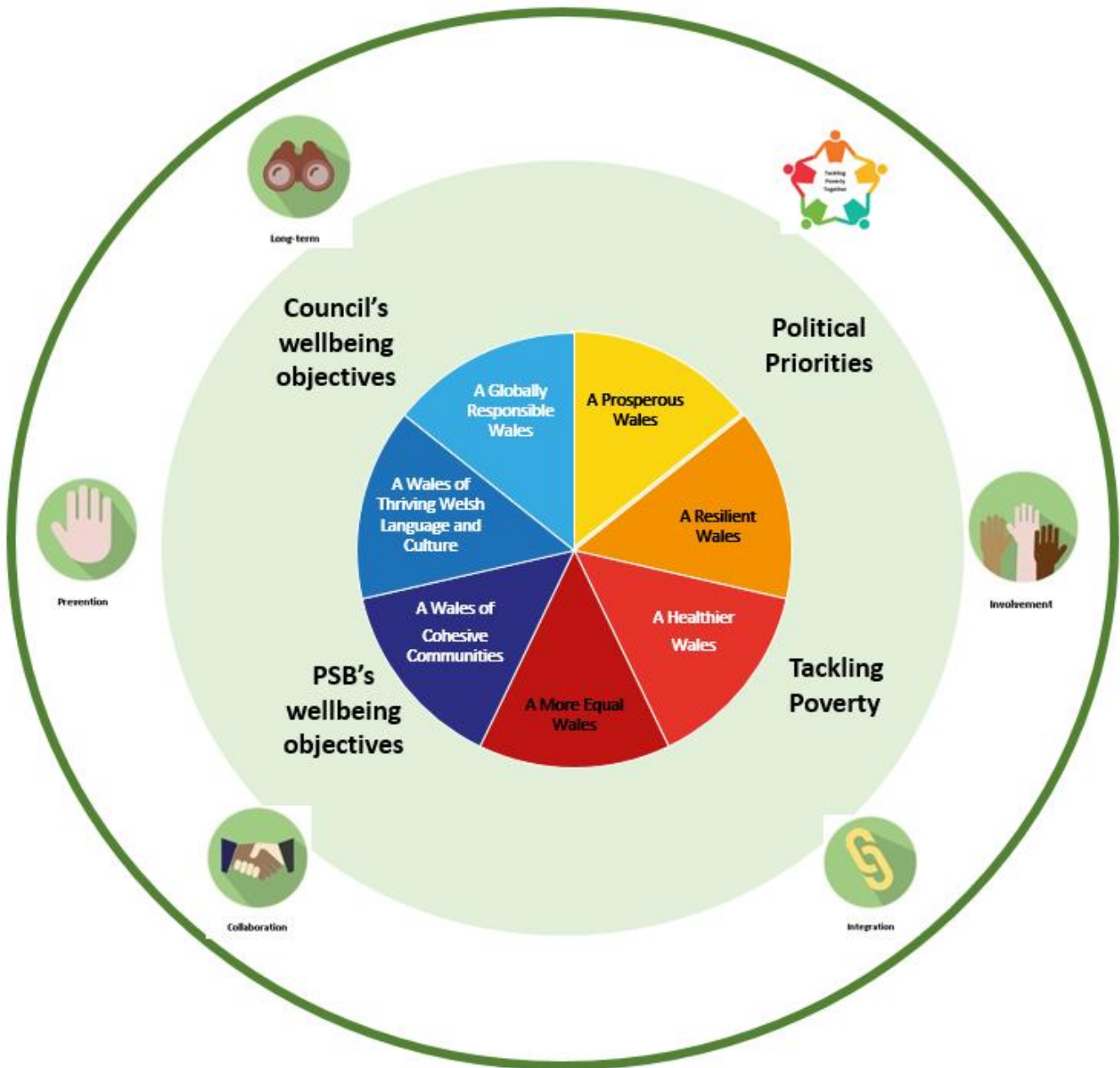


Long Term

Using the population projections for the County Borough has helped ensure a focus on the necessary conditions required in the long term to grow and retain the working age population.

Our Wider Corporate Priorities

- 2.8. In 2017, the Cwm Taf Public Services Board's Wellbeing Plan objectives were agreed by partners. At around the same time the Council's Cabinet set out its priorities. The visual below outlines how these all fit together to ensure that any impact made against these outcomes is co-ordinated to assure maximum benefit is achieved.



- 2.9. The Council's current 'Shared Vision' document is the start of a thread through the delivery of services across the Council ([Appendix IV](#)). Our local objectives and outcomes are summarised into a [strategy on a page](#) (SOAP). The five ways of working form the mechanism for service delivery and change. At the outset of the Act, the Council's project

and change management framework (including an updated integrated impact assessment) has been updated to ensure the seven national goals, four local objectives and five ways of working are embedded in decision making and delivery.

- 2.10. Team and individual objectives are also fundamentally driven by the seven national goals, four local objectives and five ways of working. This is reflected in individual one-to-one meetings and appraisals held between staff members and their manager. As such, each team member will be able to see how their role helps to deliver the four local objectives and indeed the seven national goals. This is shown in [Appendix IV](#). Equally, or perhaps more importantly, ways of working are being reviewed and changed with the sustainable development principle enabling teams to work smarter, not harder.

3. Tackling Poverty in Our Communities

- 3.1 The causes and consequences of poverty are multiple and complex. Though the proportion of households living in income poverty in Wales has fallen over the last 20 years, poverty levels in Wales still remain stubbornly above the other UK home nations (England, Scotland and Northern Ireland).
- 3.2 Almost a quarter of all individuals in Wales live in **relative poverty**, with levels of **absolute poverty** only marginally below this. Official statistics show working age poverty in Wales is persisting, despite employment growth². Average wages in Wales are still lower today than before the 2008 financial crash with nearly a quarter of all workers in Wales receiving pay below the Real Living Wage.
- 3.3 In Merthyr Tydfil, there remain high economic inactivity rates. Despite improvements at a local level, unemployment rates remaining above the Welsh average, with the level of workless households continuing to increase. Latest data shows the average gross weekly earnings in Merthyr Tydfil stands at £468.30, approximately £65 below the Welsh average³.
- 3.4 The impact of poverty can have a significant impact on people's wellbeing. Some examples of this include:
- **Housing** – this is a central component of quality of life and remains a primary pressure point for those experiencing poverty, especially if they are surviving on benefits. Rising housing costs can lead to a higher demand for social housing; in some cases can lead to an increased risk of homelessness. Where homelessness occurs, evidence suggests that the longer a person is on the streets, the more likely secondary issues such as begging or substance misuse can add further pressures;
 - **Food poverty** can leave people tired and lacking in energy leading to reduced concentration levels (particularly impactful for children in school as it could affect their ability to secure qualifications and develop skills). The issue of food poverty is now more widely recognised within our communities (e.g. services offered by the Merthyr Tydfil and Cynon Foodbank);
 - **In-work poverty** – in the last 20 years, Wales has succeeded in reducing unemployment and improving adult skills. However, many people are 'locked-out' from this economic success, with the risk of poverty rising for people in working families. Low paid and unstable jobs, coupled with rising living costs and insufficient benefits can mean that many people in Wales are 'locked-in a daily struggle to make ends

² Wales TUC Cymru

³ StatsWales – Average (median) gross weekly earnings by local area and year

meet'. The resulting choice faced by some families is having to feed their families or pay their rent. This can subsequently lead to additional stress and loss of confidence.

- **Fuel poverty** can lead to health issues arising from people having to make the choice between 'heating or eating'. Additionally, living in cold, damp and dark housing can lead to some people losing their social connections as they may be reluctant to invite people into their homes. This could lead to a feeling of being removed from society that can negatively impact upon not just their physical but also their mental wellbeing.

- 3.5 The Council's Corporate Wellbeing Plan has been designed to identify where, through targeted activities, our organisation aims to reduce the impact of poverty. At the same time, the plan aims to support people's independence and enable them to be less reliant on public services. Across the organisation, and in partnership with our key stakeholders, we will offer services that help support those at risk of poverty as well as to offer advice, guidance and more practical support those affected by poverty.
- 3.6 To help people clearly identify where Council services support prevention and tackle poverty, we have introduced the button below. As you continue through this Plan wherever you see this button, we are demonstrating how our services either directly or indirectly support people to tackle poverty.



4. Wellbeing Objectives

Wellbeing in Merthyr Tydfil

- 4.1. As part of our wellbeing duty under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Council published its refocused wellbeing objectives in April 2019 as set out in our Plan, *Focus on the Future: Wellbeing in our community*.
- 4.2. A population assessment of wellbeing was carried out by member organisations making up the Cwm Taf Public Service Board (PSB) partnership to develop our understanding of how to positively impact upon wellbeing and to identify what matters to communities. A needs assessment was published in March 2017 and can be accessed on Our Cwm Taf⁴ website. This knowledge helped shape the wellbeing objectives and to understand potential responses to improve wellbeing.
- 4.3. The Council has a duty to ensure its wellbeing objectives are designed to maximise its contribution to achieving each of the seven wellbeing goals. In doing so, the Council must take all reasonable steps in exercising its functions to meet those objectives.
- 4.4. Following the refocus exercises we have undertaken, our local wellbeing objectives remain as four. This aims to ensure a greater focus on delivery and improves accountability. Organised by wellbeing theme, each wellbeing objective has clear outcomes that will help us to respond to local community needs and contribute to the seven national wellbeing goals.

Best Start to Life

Children and young people get the best start to life and are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals.

Working Life

People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses, with a developing, safe infrastructure that establishes Merthyr Tydfil as an attractive destination.

Environmental Wellbeing

Communities protect, enhance and promote our environment and countryside.

Living Well

People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health.

⁴ You can read the [population wellbeing assessments](#) and the [well-being assessments](#) on the [Our Cwm Taf](#) website.

5. Best Start objective: Children and young people get the best start to life and are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals ⁵



The priority for this objective is to secure improvements in the educational outcomes for children and young people.

- 5.1. Education is one of the clearest predictors of life outcomes, such as employment, income and social status, and is a predictor of attitudes and wellbeing. The objective integrates the complete educational journey, from the early years through to compulsory years, and post-16. The objective provides children and young people with the skills and attributes to help them improve their own lives.
- 5.2. Improving early years support is crucial in tackling the root causes of adverse childhood experiences, which we know have a detrimental impact on future health and wellbeing. We define early years as pre-birth to 7 years old. This broad definition recognises the importance of pregnancy in influencing outcomes and the transition into primary school as a critical period in children's lives.
- 5.3. Research shows that there is value for schools to promote health and wellbeing among pupils. Pupils with better health and wellbeing are more likely to be ready to learn and achieve better academically.
- 5.4. This wellbeing objective offers a holistic and sustainable approach to meeting the wellbeing needs of children young children. While this approach is important for all children, it will particularly benefit children who face disadvantage or have a high risk of poor outcomes later in life. The key outcomes for Best Start to Life are:
 - Children live in a nurturing and stimulating home environment;
 - Children have access to high quality pre-school and school education;
 - Improve the educational outcomes for all children and young people; and
 - Children and young people have good health and emotional wellbeing.
- 5.5. The risk of poorer outcomes for children and families strongly align to underlying factors, including poverty, deprivation and low qualification levels of parents. Wider stresses such as debt, substance misuse, poor housing and lack of employment also impact on the development of children and young people.
- 5.6. The best start to life must work alongside our other wellbeing objectives to address these underlying factors, particularly:

⁵ This wellbeing objective recognises the right of all young children to high quality relationships, environments and services and will contribute strongly to promoting and upholding children's rights as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

- People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses, with a developing, safe infrastructure making Merthyr Tydfil an attractive destination.
- People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health.

5.7. To maximise our chances of achieving the best start to life, we will require an integrated response across all our wellbeing objectives by applying the five ways of working.

6. Working Life Objective: People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses, with a developing, safe infrastructure making Merthyr Tydfil an attractive destination



The priority for this objective is developing the environment and infrastructure for business to flourish

- 6.1. Research⁶ shows that people who report no educational qualifications are more likely to have relatively low income and that people who are not in employment with no qualification are more likely to be economically inactive. There is also evidence to suggest that a well-managed urban environment and high quality local services are important to create conditions that are attractive to business investors, visitors and local residents.
- 6.2. When local people talk about culture, it is often referred to as an opportunity for celebration. The refurbished Town Centre has become an asset for hosting cultural activities that bring people together and is set to develop further. Making social connections via these types of events directly correlates with improvements in physical and mental wellbeing and can help combat the growth in social isolation and loneliness. Cultural events can also help boost the prosperity of the County Borough by attracting visitors and tourists, providing employment and skills development opportunities.
- 6.3. The key outcomes Working Life wants to achieve are:
- Merthyr Tydfil realises its full economic potential, with a skilled workforce and better employment opportunities;
 - People value and enjoy the built and natural environment, protecting and enhancing our cultural assets for current and future generations; and
 - We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.

Progress against the outcomes set down in the Corporate Wellbeing Plan are supported by a more integrated, collaborative approach being taken.

- 6.4. The risk of poorer economic outcomes can be seen to align with other underlying factors, including poverty and debt, substance misuse, poor housing and health-related stresses. The causes and consequences of poverty are multiple and complex, whilst the impact of poverty can be far-reaching and devastating on people's wellbeing.

⁶ [JRF \(2015\) Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion](#)

- 6.5. This objective must work alongside our other wellbeing objectives to address these underlying factors, particularly:
- Children get the best start to life and are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals;
 - Communities protect, enhance and promote our natural and built environment and countryside; and
 - People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health.
- 6.6. Achieving the outcomes identified within Working Life will require an integrated response across all our wellbeing objectives by applying the five ways of working.

7. **Environmental Wellbeing Objective: Communities protect, enhance and promote our environment and countryside**⁷



The priority for this objective is to improve the efficient use of materials and resources by means of the waste hierarchy and to produce the Council's first Nature Recovery Plan.

- 7.1. Research shows that a healthy natural environment and countryside provides multiple benefits for people and wildlife from improved air, water and land quality, habitat protection and enhanced biodiversity to beneficial implications for physical and mental health^{8,9}. Therefore, the focus of this wellbeing objective is the work we do with our communities to protect, enhance and promote the environment and countryside.
- 7.2. How we act toward the environment and countryside will be a critical factor of a sustainable future in Merthyr Tydfil because the benefits of improving our environment will be felt across all our wellbeing objectives. We define the environment as countryside and all greenspace (natural environment) and urban locations (urban environment) within the County Borough. This broad definition of the environment recognises the importance of nature in both rural and urban environments.
- 7.3. This wellbeing objective offers a holistic and sustainable approach to meeting the environmental wellbeing needs in Merthyr Tydfil. Those needs should be interpreted broadly to include quality greenspace, habitat protection and biodiversity, resilient ecosystems, landscape character and pollution prevention. While this approach is important for the environment as a whole, it will particularly benefit areas where there are key environmental issues or risks. The key outcomes for Environmental Wellbeing are:
- Environmental damage is minimised by preventing pollution;
 - To maximise the amount of materials and resources recycled in line with the waste hierarchy;
 - Merthyr Tydfil has good quality, biodiverse and connected green infrastructure and open spaces; and
 - The use of renewable and low carbon energy is increased.
- 7.4. Evidence shows us that local environmental problems are widespread; however, the situation can be worse in low-income areas. Local environmental issues can have wider impacts that contribute to a loss of affordable, accessible green spaces; an increase in waste and fly-tipping. As the environment is an underlying factor and influencer to many other wellbeing objectives, the risks presented by degraded environment are many (e.g.

⁷ The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 requires the Council to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems taking into account diversity between and within ecosystems; the connections between and within ecosystems; the scale of ecosystems; the condition of ecosystems (including their structure and functioning) and the adaptability of ecosystems.

⁸ [Chief Medical Officer Annual Report 2014-15](#)

⁹ [Life Course, Greenspace and Health, 2016.](#)

tackling vandalism and graffiti; lack of affordable housing and limited green spaces). Research indicates that delivery of a broad range of activities associated with areas of poverty and deprivation can have huge positive impact on communities' health and wellbeing – greater satisfaction with home, reduced instances of crime and anti-social behaviour etc.

- 7.5. Communities protect, enhance and promote the environment and countryside must work alongside our other wellbeing objectives to address these underlying factors, particularly:
- People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health; and
 - People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses, with a developing, safe infrastructure making Merthyr Tydfil an attractive destination.

8. Living Well Objective: People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health



The priority of this objective is to ensure people are able to live independently and safely within their communities.

- 8.1. People need support to live independently and well in their communities for longer. Research undertaken by the Office for Disability Issues suggests that independent living provides significantly more benefits at an individual level than conventional forms of service provision. There is also evidence to suggest that older people living locally wish to remain living in their homes for as long as possible.
- 8.2. The link between physical and mental health is incontrovertible. Poor physical health can lead to poor mental health and vice versa. Conversely, good physical health can improve a person's state of mind; a strong and healthy mind can greatly improve our ability to cope with physical ailments. There is a growing body of evidence that indicates nature provides added value to the known benefits of physical activity.
- 8.3. Feeling safe influences how people value their community and is important to people's quality of life; often making the difference between people wanting to live and stay in their neighbourhood or not. There is evidence to suggest that building confidence and resilience in individuals and their communities is an important step towards improving wellbeing.
- 8.4. The Living Well objective seeks to identify and provide effective early support to adults, children and their families who are at risk of poor outcomes. By addressing potential issues early, longer term this will enable more people to live safe and independent lives within their communities whilst enjoying good physical and mental health.
- 8.5. Research shows that poverty can have a large impact on people and their ability to live independently. As social beings, people want to be productive, valuable and valued members of society. Poverty is multi-dimensional and can lead to people feeling powerless and less able to deal with unanticipated issues such as changes in the national benefits system and rising housing costs. This places them at risk of greater physical and mental stress.
- 8.6. The key long term outcomes for Living Well are:
 - People live safe and independent lives within their communities;
 - Children and adults are safeguarded from harm and feel safe; and
 - Children and young people live safely with their family or close to home and have transitioned well into adulthood

Following review of the outcomes as set down in Year 2 of the Plan, for Year 3 it was decided to refocus the outcomes to support the more integrated/collaborative approach being taken to meet these.

- 8.7. This objective must work alongside all our other wellbeing objectives which address these underlying factors, particularly:
- Children get the best start to life and are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals;
 - People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses, with a developing, safe infrastructure making Merthyr Tydfil an attractive destination; and
 - Communities protect, enhance and promote our natural environment and countryside.

9. **Appendix I: Seven Wellbeing Goals**

GOAL	Description of the goal
A prosperous Wales	An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.
A resilient Wales	A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).
A healthier Wales	A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.
A more equal Wales	A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).
A Wales of cohesive communities	Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.
A globally responsible Wales	A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.

10. Appendix II: The Five Ways of Working

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 puts in place a ‘*sustainable development principle*’ (the five ways of working) which tells organisations how to go about meeting their duty under the Act. Any reference to a public body doing something “*in accordance with the sustainable development principle*”, means that the body must act 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.

Public bodies need to make sure that when making their decisions they take into account the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future.

There are five things that public bodies need to think about to show that they have applied the five ways of working. Following these ways of working will help us work together better, avoid repeating past mistakes and tackle some of the long term challenges we are facing.



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

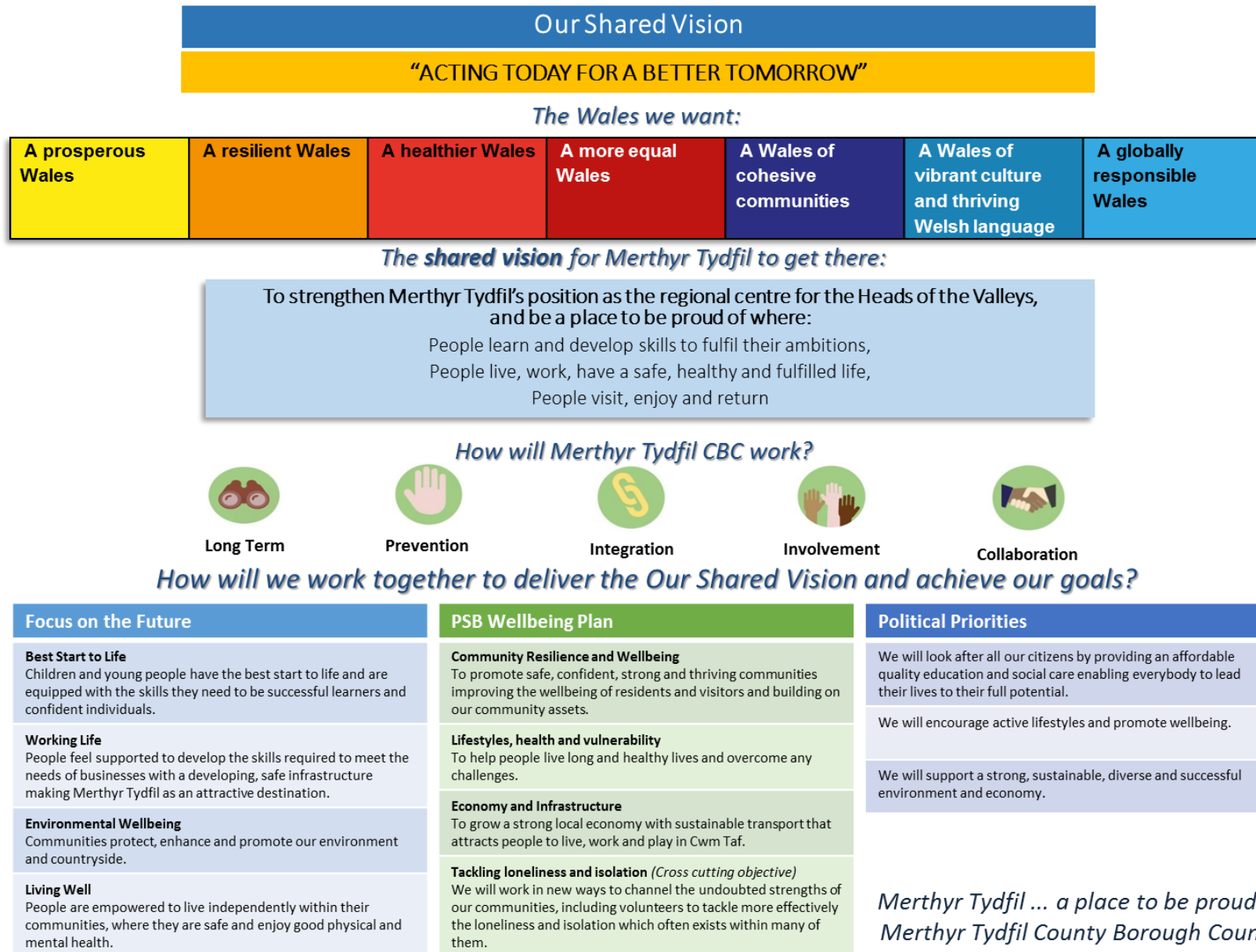
Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.



Involvement

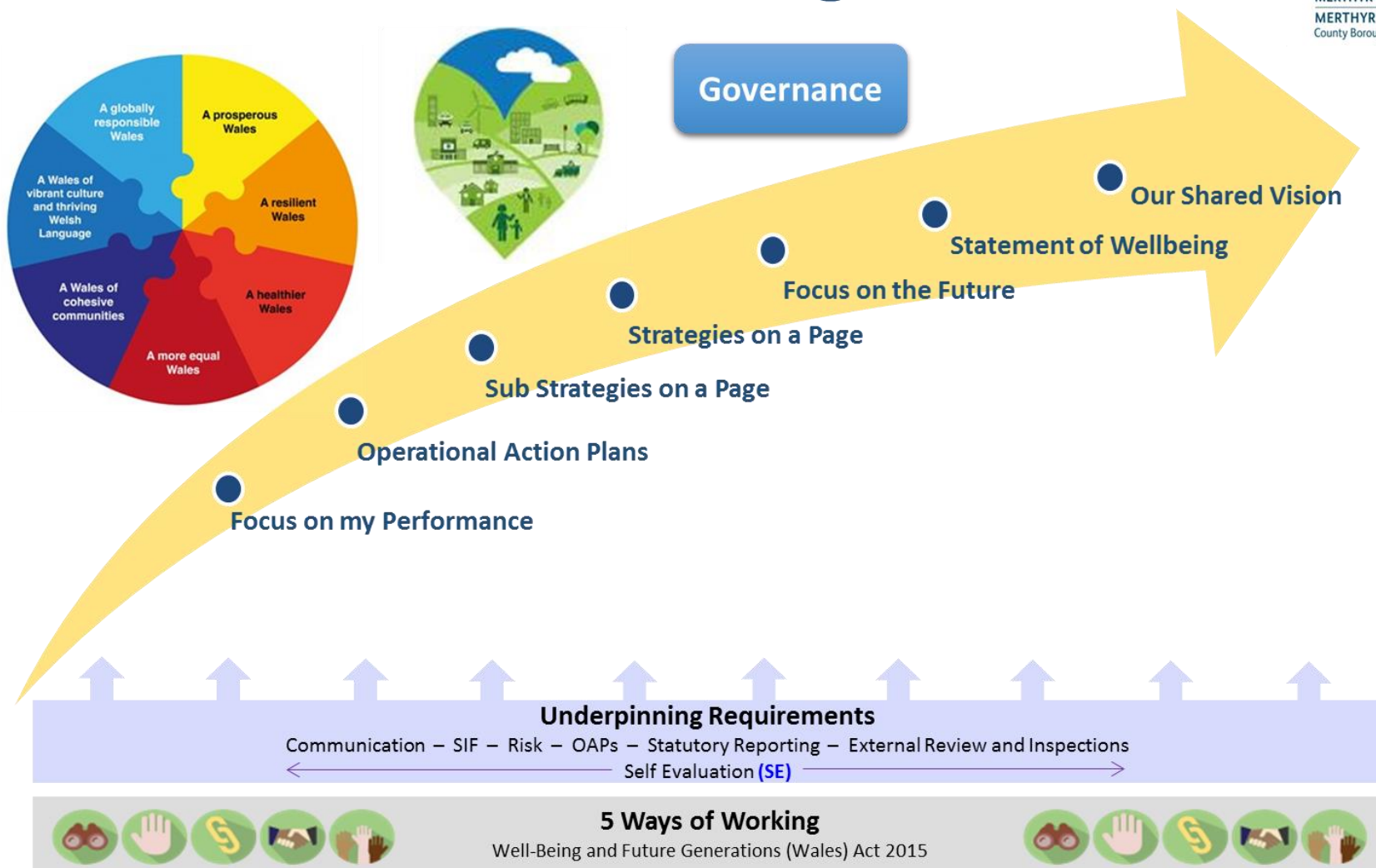
The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the wellbeing goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

11. Appendix III: Our Current Shared Vision



12. Appendix IV: The Golden Thread

How Does it Fit Together?



*Merthyr Tudful ...
... lle i fod yn falch ohono*

*Merthyr Tydfil ...
... a place to be proud of*