



COUNCIL – 23RD OCTOBER 2019

SUBJECT: PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE THE FUTURE GENERATIONS ADVISORY PANEL

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION & CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To consider the proposal to discontinue the Future Generations Advisory Panel.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The Future Generations Advisory Panel (FGAP), previously known as the Sustainable Development Advisory Panel (SDAP), was established in February 2002 to advise on, and mainstream sustainable development. In May 2016 the Panel became the FGAP, partly in response to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Significant steps have been taken in embedding sustainable development and well-being in service planning and decision-making across the local authority since the inception of SDAP. The FGAP continued this work and has achieved its core aim to raise awareness of well-being in the context of future generations. It is considered that a formal group is no longer required to champion these issues.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 That Council considers the proposal to discontinue the Future Generations Advisory Panel.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Since the Sustainable Development Advisory Panel was established in 2002, significant strides have been taken to raise understanding of sustainable development and well-being which is now embedded across the Authority. The FGAP has achieved its core aim and is no longer required to champion these issues.

4.2 Other structures have been put in place to ensure the ongoing consideration of these issues, including the newly formed Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee.

4.3 All reports for decision are now required to consider well-being issues, including the sustainable development principle, otherwise known as the five ways of working. Corporate Well-being Objectives are reported to the relevant Scrutiny Committees.

4.4 Attendance at FGAP has been relatively low. The Panel has met six times since it became FGAP in May 2016. The highest number of Elected Members able to attend any of these meetings has been five. Eleven Elected Members are allocated to the Panel.

4.5 Considerable officer time is required to facilitate the Panel. Given that other mechanisms now exist to secure sustainable development the time spent is considered to be disproportionate.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 The Sustainable Development Advisory Panel (SDAP) was established in February 2002 to advise on, and mainstream sustainable development. The Panel met every six weeks until 2013 when meetings became quarterly. The Panel's work programme covered a diverse range of topics, largely with an environmental focus, from carbon reduction and fleet issues to fracking and the effects of solar flares. The Panel made recommendations direct to Cabinet.

5.2 In the last few years the term well-being has been used to replace sustainable development, with the sustainable development principle, otherwise known as the five ways of working, now enshrined in legislation within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. In May 2016 the Panel became the Future Generations Advisory Panel (FGAP), partly in response to the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The primary aim of FGAP, as set out in its terms of reference is *"to promote the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of residents of the county borough by providing guidance and advice to the Authority on the work required as part of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This includes ensuring that this work is undertaken in accordance with the "sustainable development principle", and does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"*.

5.3 Since 2002 significant strides have been taken in raising understanding of the sustainable development principle and well-being across the authority with the FGAP overseeing programmes of work to embed understanding of the issues, and projects to put the principles into action.

5.4 Other structures now exist which are better placed to mainstream consideration of these issues, including the newly formed Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee.

5.5 Training is given to all Members on scrutiny committees to ensure that "sustainability" and "future generations" are being considered as reports pass through internal processes.

5.6 All reports for decision are now required to consider well-being issues, including the sustainable development principle. Training for officers involved in service development, report writing and decision making has been developed and is being rolled out.

5.7 It is proposed that the role of highlighting key future generations issues and topics with the appropriate scrutiny committee would be undertaken by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Sustainability & Future Generations. This could be done by the Cabinet Member attending meetings of Scrutiny Leadership Group twice per annum and discussing areas for consideration by respective scrutiny committees. The scrutiny chairs could then highlight this with their scrutiny committee when agreeing work programmes. Political Group Leaders could also highlight issues to the Cabinet Member for consideration. The Cabinet Member would identify the potential issues and topics through 6th monthly meetings with the Policy Team who would review committee forward work programmes to identify any potential gaps. The terms of reference for Scrutiny Leadership Group, approved by Council include the following 'Ensure effective liaison across the work of the Committees'.

5.8 Attendance at FGAP has been poor. The Panel is made up of eleven Elected Members with a political balance reflecting the make up of the Council. The Panel has met six times since it became FGAP in May 2016. The highest number of Members attending any of these meetings has been five. Concern has been expressed at the amount of officer time spent preparing reports and presentations for the meetings given the number of Members attending. Concern has also been expressed that external organisation presentations have been provided, again to a small number of Elected Members. Recent meetings have included presentations from the Caerphilly Youth Forum and Coleg y Cymoedd. Five Members of the Panel were present at these meetings.

5.9 A meeting was held on the 10th June 2019 between the Cabinet Member and Group Leaders. At this meeting the above points were acknowledged and it was agreed that consultation should begin to consider discontinue the Future Generations Advisory Panel prior to a Council decision

5.10 **Conclusion**

The original purpose of SDAP, and subsequently FGAP, has been achieved. Structures are now in place to provide mainstream mechanisms that ensure that sustainable development, well-being and future generations issues are embedded across the organisation and considered in the decision making processes.

5.11 Attendance at FGAP has been poor. Concern has been expressed at the amount of officer time spent preparing reports and presentations for the meetings given the number of Elected Members able to attend.

5.12 It is proposed that FGAP should be discontinued. The Panel is listed in the Council's Constitution and therefore approval by Council will be required to achieve this.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 The key assumption is that Members of Scrutiny Committees have, or can be given, the appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding of sustainable development and well-being issues to be able to scrutinise topics against these considerations.

7. **LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES**

7.1 The Authority has a duty to maximise its contribution to all of the Corporate Well-being Objectives, and adhere to the sustainable development principle (the five ways of working).

8. **WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS**

8.1 The role of FGAP has been to help to ensure that the Authority works with its Public Services Board (PSB) partners to deliver the objectives set out in the PSB Well-being Plan – "The Caerphilly We Want", and that the authority is meeting its own Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. This includes maximising our contribution to all of the seven Well-being Goals, and in a way that is consistent with the five ways of working.

8.2 This function has been embedded into the culture and operation of the authority, this includes the requirement for each report to include a section on how the proposals have been developed to contribute to the seven well-being goals and are consistent with the five ways of working. Each Scrutiny Committee has received training to understand their role in terms of scrutinising reports in line with these requirements.

9. **EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no equalities implications in relation to this report.

10. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no financial implications in relation to this report.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no personnel implications in relation to this report.

12. CONSULTATIONS

- 12.1 The report reflects the views of the consultees, with the exception of the following comments:
- 12.2 Cllr J Ridgewell suggested that it might be helpful to initially trial the new arrangement with an option to resurrect the FGAP should it become evident that the change isn't delivering. The officer view is that the case for discontinuing FGAP, as set out in the report, is sound, and that we do not believe that there should be a trial period in which to review this decision.
- 12.3 Cllr G Simmonds expressed the view that the Panel was an important forum for Members to raise questions and to receive answers on reports. He highlighted the recently declared climate emergency as a subject which the Panel should consider. As set out in the report it is the view that other mechanisms now exist to undertake this role.
- 12.4 Cllr C Mann suggested that relevant issues are taken up by a small cross-party group of members meeting relevant officers, possibly on an ad-hoc basis to examine where progress has been made, or not enough progress achieved and then pursue issues as appropriate. It is felt that additional meetings are not required, but an amendment has been made to the report to enable Political Group Leaders to highlight issues to the Cabinet Member for consideration.

13. STATUTORY POWER

13.1 Local Government Act 1972.

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